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"That valuable public servant,
A Gentleman with a Duster."
—G. K. CHESTERTON.

The Mirrors of Downing Street
Some Political Reflections

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The Glass of Fashion
Some Social Reflections

Seven Ages
A Narrative of the Human Mind

SEVEN AGES

SEVEN AGES

A BRIEF AND SIMPLE NARRATIVE OF THE PILGRIMAGE OF THE HUMAN MIND AS IT HAS AFFECTED THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD

BY

A GENTLEMAN WITH A DUSTER

Author of "The Mirrors of Downing Street"

Harold Begbie.

History is "a voice forever sounding across the centuries the laws of right and wrong. Opinions alter, manners change, creeds rise and fall, but the moral law is written on the tablets of eternity. For every false word or unrighteous deed, for cruelty and oppression, for lust or vanity, the price has to be paid at last: not always by the chief offenders, but paid by some one. Justice and truth alone endure and live. Injustice and falsehood may be long-lived, but doomsday comes at last to them, in French revolutions and other terrible ways."

FROUDE.

WITH PORTRAITS

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INTRODUCTION

THIS book represents a modest effort to assist average persons in the English-speaking world to understand the roots of their thinking.

Our civilisation has arrived at its present state in evolution after a long, painful, and most hazardous mental journey. All its achievements, and all its hopes of greater things, are now, in a critical hour, for better or for worse, largely in the hands of men and women who have little notion of that far and perilous journey, and perhaps no clear idea at all of their commanding responsibility towards the future of mankind.

Therefore I presume to hope that a book which relates in quite simple and almost narrative form at least some part of the pilgrimage of the human mind, and which conducts its reader to at least some of the chief battle-fields of controversy out of which the thoughts of man have emerged to their present fashion of looking at life and the universe, may be of service in helping to guard from the blunders of ignorance and the follies of impatience both what is precious in civilisation and what is vital to further advance.

Although the book is intended only for the plain man whose education has not helped him to trace the genealogy of the human mind or the pedigree of his own opinions, I think I do not make too bold a claim when I utter the hope that no competent authority in scholarship will seriously dispute those main opinions which my narrative has here and there forced me to express rather dogmatically.

But, in any case, let me disclaim any intention to teach the least instructed of my readers what he should think. My sole object is to suggest to him, first, that all history is "mental travel"; second, that evolution is a term signifying the work of mind on matter; and third, that if all our rights and privileges have been purchased for us by the past, some at least of our obligations and duties belong to the future.

By furnishing our minds with knowledge of the pilgrimage of thought we can avoid the spirit

> Which visits ancient sins on modern times
> And punishes the Pope for Cæsar's crimes;

and, by the same means, come to feel in the lives of those heroic souls who carried the fortunes of civilisation through darkness, through tempest, and through the languors of noon, in ages long past, a cause both for admiration and gratitude, a call both to constant faith and unsparing effort.

None of us is so wise that he does not need constantly

to remind himself of the saying of a great Englishman: "The mind is the man. If that be kept pure, a man signifies somewhat; if not, I would very fain see what difference there is betwixt him and a beast. He hath only some activity to do some more mischief."

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SEVEN AGES

CHAPTER I

THE AGE OF SOCRATES

(470–399 B.C.)

SEVEN AGES

CHAPTER I

THE AGE OF SOCRATES

(470–399 B.C.)

At the dawn of modern history stands the figure of an old stone-cutter: attractive and quaint, likeable and eccentric, but wholly unimpressive; the last man in the world a sculptor would take for any aspect of human glory.

No picturesque dust of the wilderness stains his shabby garment; no prophetic fire burns in his rather ludicrous eyes. On the contrary, he is a playful, a whimsical, a waggish, an ironical person; in form, comic and clownish, so that he is likened by one of his friends to a cottage loaf; in nature, nearer akin to Bunyan, Samuel Johnson, Sir Thomas Browne, or even Charles Lamb, than to John the Baptist, Mohammed, Luther, Robespierre, or any other firebrand of history.

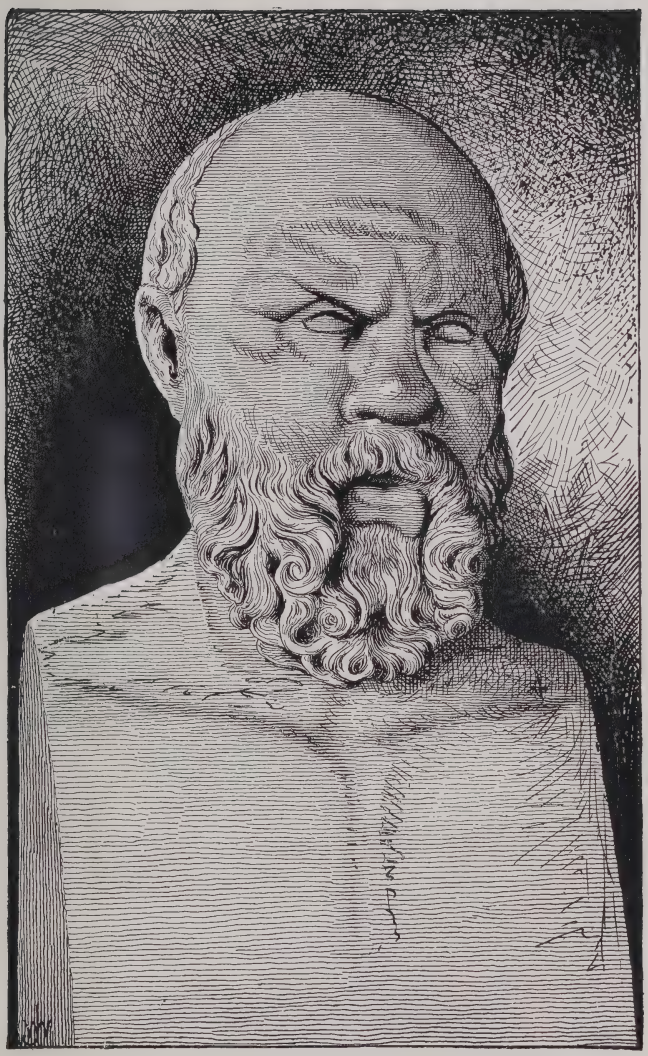
Such was Socrates, the originating genius of common sense, the great teacher of moral and intellectual veracity,

one of the profoundest influences in our Anglo-Saxon civilisation.

It is worthy of reflection that this man, who opened the windows of the human mind on a new heaven and a new earth, proclaimed no fiery propaganda, drew no crusading sword, ordained no priesthood, laid no impatient hand upon the altars of tradition, nor, in his commerce with the foolishness and perversity of mankind, ever raised his voice above the genial tones of courtesy.

Yet to him had come one of those strange spiritual experiences which change the direction of a man's soul, and stamp his human nature with the ineffaceable mark of divinity.

Like every Greek citizen, Socrates had served as a soldier, had marched cheerfully and fought heroically accoutred in helmet, cuirass, and greaves, armed with sword, battle-axe, javelin, and shield—a man of conspicuous strength. One day this soldier of notable physical powers found his feet rooted to the ground in the camp of the Greek army. Thus pinned to the earth he remained for twenty-four hours in a trance, the body suddenly reduced to impotence, the spirit caught up into regions whither no eye could follow it. From this long swoon of the senses, the soul of Socrates emerged with a knowledge which transformed his life and afterwards transformed the life of the human race.



SOCRATES

From a bust in the Villa Albani
(*Baumeister*)

The knowledge which came to him during this day of trance, revolutionary knowledge of the highest import to humanity, was not, however, to be shouted from the house-tops nor to be made the battle-cry of a new religion. It was to be passed with smile and jest, with banter and with playful irony, into the mind of any conversational man who chanced to cross his road. Thus did Socrates construe his celestial commission. He was to give his whole life to its teaching, he was to be ruled by it in all his habits and in all his words: but he was not to get hot about it, certainly he was not to bring into the world a new school of fanatics.

Consider, before we pass to the message itself, this conversion of Socrates: the strangest in history, perhaps the most significant.

Men like Luther may dismember an incoherent church, or like Robespierre overturn an unbalanced throne, or like Napoleon establish empires as glittering and short-lived as the ephemera which swarm above the swamps of stagnation: such events in the long pilgrimage of mankind are in truth of little more meaning to evolution than those "personal incidents" in the parliaments of nations which catch the excited attention of the newspaper reporter, but bear no relation to the debate and possess no significance for the ultimate historian.

Evolution, let us learn as the alphabet of all our future thinking, is a movement in thought, not the swing of an

axe. It is leaven, not dynamite. The true servants of this mysterious movement in mind are never to be sought among conspirators and assassins: they are the inspired talkers who sit peacefully at meat with their fellow-men.

In a man such as Socrates, a man of unruffled gentleness and an infinite patience, an inspired man moved by knowledge too high for conflict, too deep for sect or party, we discern the authentic apostle of evolution, the true and faithful pilot who quietly bears the children of men from one shore of existence to another, from illusion to reality, from the temporal to the eternal; for such a man penetrates to the hidden springs of human nature and in the secret places of personality makes those changes of the mind which alter, not so much the always transitory conditions of life, but life itself.

Fretful and impatient men, swept off their feet by indignation or enthusiasm, destroy more than they build, and what they build with the trembling hands of excited haste is soon destroyed by their lineal descendants of physical reform. But the man who has undergone a veritable conversion, who has been in true communion with the unseen, comes quietly back to earth with the knowledge that the soul alone is the real, and that life has eternity in which to complete its perfection. He overturns nothing—not even a footstool. His work lies in a region far removed from the Wardour Streets and Tottenham Court Roads of history. He penetrates to the

holy of holies. And there he neither uses the sacrificial knife nor mumbles the incantations of mystery. What he does is to fertilise the mind of humanity with an idea. And that idea may be traced descending with power and increase down all the ages of mankind.

From his trance Socrates emerged with an overwhelming sense of an absolute goodness transcending human morality, an absolute beauty transcending earth's imperfect loveliness, an absolute truth transcending the reach of man's bounded reason. Human life became for him no longer a thing apart from this universal existence of the divine, no longer its illegitimate or guilty offspring. On the contrary, the whole business of man's life was to dwell with the thought of this transcending perfection, to live with the consciousness of this divine reality in his mind. The supreme concern of the wise man was to care for his soul.

The word "soul" did not mean to Socrates a shadowy ghost or a breath that came from and returned to the circumambient air; it meant, quite simply, the conscious self of a man, his most pressing sense of vitality, his most natural sense of reality. In the teaching of Socrates, we may say, man became *to himself,* for the first time since the creation of the world, a living soul. Those who listened to him did not speculate whether they *possessed* souls: they thought of themselves *as* souls. This was the supreme achievement of Socrates. He naturalised the

supernatural. He was a realist in the region of idealism. He unified the universe.

His faith in the soul, as Pater says, was a matter of invincible natural prepossession, an immovable personal conviction; it came to him, in his own characteristic words, "apart from demonstration, with a sort of natural likelihood and fitness." The universe was created by a divine power: in that universe, paramount in this particular part of it, was man's soul. Therefore, as Plato bears witness, Socrates taught his fellow-citizens the supreme duty of caring for their souls. This is to say, he established an authority in human life, rescuing it from moral chaos and giving it both a route and a destination.

When we come to learn what Socrates meant by caring for the soul, we see the greatness of the revolution which he wrought in the history of the human race.

He made his appeal, not to revelation, but to common sense. He neither threatened nor rhapsodised. The chief words of his discourse were truthfulness, justice, fortitude, temperance, self-command, beneficence, beauty; but never does he employ these noble words to adorn a peroration or to wheel like cavalry in rounding off a sonorous period. Rather do they dart from his mind on the spear-head of a sudden home-thrust, or glide almost imperceptibly into his bantering table-talk, there to mingle their solemn colours with the lighter tones of a jest.

His great work was to make men honest. In his divine passion for reality he saw that illusion had its chief strength in deception. How easily are men deceived! It is a world of dupes and blunderers, the victims of deception—deception of the soul by the senses, deception of character by fashion and pretension. Therefore he laid all the emphasis of his teaching on veracity.

Honesty at the first glance is one of the humdrum virtues. It seems to scale no height, to gain no glory. It looks like a word for the copy-book rather than the pulpit; a theme for the elementary moralist, not the orator. But in the mouth of Socrates it became a word of commanding significance, proving itself more powerful than the sword of Alexander, more creative than all the edicts of Cæsar. And, if we think about it, even to this day is it not one of the greatest words of the human spirit—so great because the thing it denotes is so rare? An honest workman, an honest merchant, an honest lawyer, an honest doctor, an honest theologian, an honest statesman: when we encounter such a person do we not feel that he stands out from the ruck of his fellows with an eminent, an uplifting attraction? To find a man we can trust, a man who rings true, a man in whom there is no shadow of the false, is not this an experience that kindles the fire of a creative admiration?

Socrates believed that this was what God chiefly requires of a man—to be honest. Therefore he set himself to show men the attraction and reasonableness of honesty.

To this end he taught them the art of an inward dialogue.

He was the first of men to formulate a logic of the conscience, to identify the conscience with the soul. He taught a dialectic of the personality. By means of introspection men were to become acquainted with the state of their souls. They were to be merciless cross-examiners of all the ideas, opinions, and acts which the soul adduced as reasons for its good opinion of itself. They were to talk to themselves. They were to make the language of their thoughts, not a monologue, but a duologue.

Further, they were to subject the eloquence of poets and teachers to a like cross-examination. They were to be very careful about the deceiving power of words. They were to challenge even ordinary words for their definition. This was more important than guarding the soul from deception by the senses. For, whereas any man might see that it was unreasonable for an immortal soul to live as a perishable body, few were able to discern the deception which too often lies in an impressive word even in a word which seems to commend the highest virtue.

All this was new to the world. The term "soul" had hitherto belonged to mystifying superstition or to unintelligent sophistry. The idea of introspection as a religious duty, the idea that a man might do more for himself in cross-examining his conscience than the priest could do for him by sacrificing terror-stricken animals

or by enjoining purifications, this was a revolution in the mind of the human race.

Moreover, the manner in which the revolution was accomplished was itself a revolution. Socrates appealed to no God and to the authority of no philosopher. He appealed to the common sense of mankind, making that good sense the seat of the divine, the tribunal of the eternal. In appealing to this universal common sense, let us remember too that he made no call to the wilderness and uttered no command to preach. A man was not to set about reforming the world because he had discovered his own mind. He was not to forsake his work and take to converting his fellow-men because he had discovered himself to be a soul. If he was a good maker of pots, he was to continue making pots. The one difference conversion should make to him was in his attitude to life. He was to live in the companionship of eternal and immutable ideas, unmoved by the accidents of fortune, untempted by the seductions of the world, an honest man doing his duty without fear and without pride, his inward life known to him with as unsparing a truthfulness as it was known to God.

Now Socrates not only contributed this new idea to the world; he contributed as well a personality which commended itself to the affection and the reason of the best kind of men. He was entirely consistent. There he stood, in his shabby garment, no sandals on his feet, no money in his hand, his whole life open to his fellow-

citizens, teaching the same veracity of soul which so palpably distinguished his daily life, practising in every detail of his Athenian existence the identical righteousness which he preached in discourse.

Further, his preaching, if preaching it could be called, was not like the preaching of his predecessor Pythagoras, who invented the word "philosophy," and founded a religion, and laid difficult commandments upon his disciples. To listen to Socrates was as good as going to the play. There was wit in almost every line of his conversation. He unmasked impostors with a smooth gentleness which was extremely humorous. He created a new art: the art of turning the soul inside out. The search for an honest man became almost a sport. In his oblique and humorous fashion he revealed to men the sublime beauty of goodness by disentangling the pretensions of the charlatans from their badness, and making that badness ridiculous. And all this went with a treatment of divine things which was singularly fresh and penetratingly real. He could talk of God without shuddering, and of the soul without unction. In his eyes, which were for ever seeking and searching the eyes of other men, was the twinkling smile of a question difficult to answer, and beneath that quizzical smile the profound depths of an unfathomable serenity.

Men were drawn not only to his teaching, but to the man himself. In Socrates they felt the irresistible attraction of one who was supremely good and su-

premely human. They loved him and tried to be like him.

The time in which he came called for a steadying influence. Some two hundred years before his day Greek genius had begun to break with the paralysing tyranny of tradition. A few remarkable men in the cities of Ionia had come to regard nature as a document which promised greater enlightenment to human kind than all the superstitions of mythology. The gods and goddesses of legend were seen to be immoral and contemptible: were felt to be unworthy of man's attention. They explained nothing. Nature, on the other hand, was full of manifest greatness and mystery, and was controlled by law, ruled by intelligence. To understand nature would be to discover the origin and purposes of creation.

A new thing came slowly to birth: philosophy. The idea meant sight-seeing, looking about, observation, contemplation of visible things, reflection on their origins. It was science. Those who followed philosophy were searchers after knowledge, devoted to truth for its own sake. They had discovered a new interest for the human mind: a study of the physical universe. Their faith was strong that the majesty and mystery of this great physical universe might be traced back by the mind of man to its intelligent beginning.

We see the spirit of these men, the first founders of European civilisation, in the reply made by Pythagoras

to one who asked him the meaning of the new word philosopher:

"The life of man (he said) seemed to him to resemble that Fair, which was kept by all Greece with the celebration of games. For as there, some sought for glory by the exercise of the body, and nobility by obtaining a crown; and others aimed at profit and gain in buying and selling; but a third sort, who were people of the best fashion, neither wanted applause nor gain, but came only to see and consider what was a-doing, and in what manner: so likewise we are come from another life and nature into this life, as from some city, to the celebration of a Fair; and some hunt after glory, and others money; and some few, despising everything else, diligently study nature: these are called lovers of wisdom, that is Philosophers: and as in the other case, it is more noble to look on, than to acquire anything, so in life, the knowledge and contemplation of nature is preferable to all other studies."

Anaxagoras, asked why he was born, made answer, "To contemplate the works of nature"; Heracleitus, asked how he obtained his knowledge, replied, "I searched myself"; while Plato, later on, in words which will never die, defined the philosopher as "the spectator of all time and all existence." From the first beginnings of Greek speculation, there is this admirable dignity of the mind, an inward and spiritual freedom as different from political liberty as grace is different from deportment—an en-

franchisement of the soul, setting it free from all the assaults of time and circumstance. The Greeks desired to understand the universe in which man found himself with an inquisitive mind and a soul capable of comprehension. They set out to satisfy this desire with temperance, reverence, and a courage which was without effrontery. They called this sightseeing journey of the soul by the name of philosophy.

But the first founders of our civilisation, those wonderful Ionians whose philosophy was as well a search after goodness as a search after truth, were followed by professional casuists who lived so entirely under the spell of words that a dexterous use of mere terms became almost the object of existence. They ceased to be seekers after truth. They appeared before the people as jugglers of words, acrobats and contortionists of logic, taking money for their performances, confusing the mind of Athens with scepticisms and atheisms which rotted even the most ancient roots of conduct.

It was in an hour of human history as perilous as this that Socrates appeared among men with his message from God. He had as his companion a spirit, or a voice, which constantly instructed him. One of his English critics has said hastily that this dæmonium of Socrates is a case for the pathologist—without pausing to ask himself whether any pathologist in Europe could survive a cross-examination at the hands of Socrates. As well

might he refer the genius of Shakespeare to a phrenologist or the broadcasting sympathy of Wesley's soul to a man like Dr. Freud—of one idea and that a nasty one.

But thus in all ages of pause and poverty does well-intentioned mediocrity, mounting the step-ladder of presumption, attempt to take with tape or foot-rule the measure of Alp and Himalaya.

To Socrates, who was the great enemy of all such quackery, his conversion was real, the restraining voice of his dæmonium was real: and we must be blind indeed if we do not see that it was only because of this unmistakable spiritual experience that he became, what this very critic acknowledges he did become, the chief originator of "a vast intellectual revolution." The man was inspired.

When he began to teach, the priest was in power but on the defensive: a situation of deadly menace both to freedom and to truth. Religion was supported by the superstitious peasant, afraid for his crops and his cattle more than for his own soul, and by such vested interests of the temple as were represented by the men who contracted to supply sacrificial animals for the altar—

> . . . that heifer lowing at the skies,
> And all her silken flanks with garlands drest.

But the more thoughtful and disinterested citizens were listening with eagerness or curiosity to almost every conceivable theory of materialistic philosophy. Scepticism

was in the air. Not only were the old gods passing under a cloud: the heavens were emptying themselves of any object for the adoration of man.

To understand the work of Socrates we must remind ourselves that the Greeks, who had invented arithmetic, mathematics, and philosophy, were the founders of physical science, and that centuries before the birth of Jesus they had their theories that the earth was a sphere floating in space, that the moon shone by reflected light, that matter was composed of atoms, that all things were ultimately of the same basis, that man had an animal for his ancestor, and that he and all other living things had come to be what they were by the pressure of circumstance and the influence of heredity. Furthermore, to show how wide they spread the net of their speculations, these ancient Greeks had in Gorgias a philosopher of nihilism, and in the brilliant Heracleitus a Nietzsche who hated democracy, lauded war as the father of all virtue, and bitterly denounced Homer as a blasphemer against the universe because he had prayed for its abolition.

It was, then, in an age of ferment and disintegration, of new credulities and perilous freedoms, that Socrates came with his dæmonium, the voice from heaven. The violet-crowned city of Athens in whose narrow, mephitic, unlighted, and rough-paved streets he walked with his companions, or under whose mouldering porticoes he taught his disciples, or in whose shops he watched and

questioned the artificers at their work, was a place not only of intellectual excitement but of almost inconceivable discomfort and of abhorrent moral evil.

Slavery was accepted by all men as an ordinance of heaven. Virtuous women were not expected to be intelligent and were denied all the arenas of discussion. Only the courtesan was treated as an intellectual person: in her, wit was regarded as a natural ornament. Because the virtuous women were degraded to the position of house-slaves and excluded from the higher functions of family life, perversions of nature were deep-rooted. Cruelty flourished and was unquestioned. Superstition held not only religion in its clutches, but medicine as well. Suffering was wide-spread and almost disregarded. Plague crept with foreign immigrants into the pestiferous streets of these ancient cities, and slew thousands of the Greeks, finally allying itself with war to overthrow the physical basis of Athenian civilisation.

In thinking of the Greece of those days, says a competent authority, we must not only "think away railways and telegraphs and gasworks and tea and advertisements and bananas," but many other things in the catalogue of comfort. We must imagine houses without drains, beds without sheets or springs, rooms as cold, or as hot, as the open air, only draughtier, meals that began and ended with pudding, and cities that could boast neither gentry nor millionaires. We must learn to tell the time without watches, to cross rivers without bridges,

and seas without a compass, to fasten our clothes (or rather our two pieces of cloth) with two pins instead of rows of buttons, to wear our shoes or sandals without stockings, to warm ourselves over a pot of ashes, to judge open-air plays or lawsuits on a cold winter's morning, to study poetry without books, geography without maps, and politics without newspapers.[1]

An open drain ran through the streets of Athens. Her buildings were dictated by the militarist or the priest: they were not the creation of the æsthetic sense. All was haphazard and *laissez-faire*: nothing was well ordered that touched the common life of man. Even education was neglected, and the national schoolmaster unknown.

Moreover, we must bear in mind that Greece was not a country divided only between the superstitious and the enlightened. As with us, so with them in days long before Socrates, the mass of men cared for none of these things. Xenophanes of Colophon in the sixth century before Christ complains that men think more of muscle than of mind, that the multitude run after wrestlers and boxers, athletes and drivers of racing chariots, and leave the philosopher, who could tell them that there is only one God, and who could prove to them that the gods of Homer and Hesiod are contemptible fictions, to starve at the street corner. This testimony is of value, seeing that it helps us to realise one of the chief truths of history, to

[1] *The Greek Commonwealth*, Alfred Zimmern, p. 213.

wit, that progress proceeds from the few, and that the apathy and indifference of the multitude furnish the reason for the slowness of all improvement.

One thing more we must remember: during a great part of Socrates' life, war was distracting the world of Greece. Athens, the centre of political life, was for years a besieged city, and only on the sea could the citizen move with some sense of freedom.

Now, in this excited and uncomfortable world Socrates, with his cool head, his observant eye, and his divine certitude, stood midway between old craven superstition and all disfiguring materialism. He believed in a supreme Excellence, but not in the legends of the priest. He believed in the existence of the material world, but not in its power to satisfy the soul of man. Thus fortified by faith, his affections were quietly set on moral and spiritual perfection. He sought the good life, the life of temperance and aspiration. He conformed to nearly all the traditions of his time, but followed in his spirit the path of a new righteousness. He censured only the absurdities of those philosophers who would argue away the idea of a universal intelligence, reducing nature to a chaos and the mind of man to an accident.

This new philosophy, we should observe, was founded upon physical science, a science which had its gaze directed solely to the mysterious past of creation. It was unconcerned with the future of mankind. It believed

that an explanation could be found for all this universal frame of things—the starry heavens, the round world, and the laws of nature. In a word, it was concerned only with causation, as Greek literature and Greek art were concerned only with antiquity. We might almost say that every Greek of that time walked forward with his head turned over his shoulder.

Socrates ridiculed the vanity of these new philosophers. He broke down their fine-spun theories with the solid words of common sense. There was order in the world. There was a manifest design in nature. The soul of man knew by instinct the difference between right and wrong.

This contention was not between belief and unbelief. Unbelief is the only religion which has never existed. "Not to believe," says Bacon, "is to believe." It was a contention between belief in purpose and belief in no purpose. Socrates argued that the universe declared the power and the intelligence of a supreme being. His opponents argued that things had come to be what they were either by an accident of nature or at the whim of powers who were careless of mankind.

We may most conveniently summarise his attitude by considering the criticism which has been brought against him by scholars of our own time. As late as 1914, one of these critics wrote in his haste:

"When Socrates argued that, because the human body is animated by a consciousness, the material universe

must be similarly animated, Democritus might have answered that the world presents no appearance of being organised like an animal."

To which objection Socrates, we think, would have replied: "But it is *organised.*"

The same critic strongly opposes himself to the common-sense argument of Socrates that design in nature implies a creative intelligence. We read:

"When he argued that because statues and pictures are known to be the work of intelligence, the living models from which they are copied must be similarly due to design, Aristodemus should have answered, that the former are seen to be manufactured, while the latter are seen to grow."

To which argument, Socrates would surely have made answer: "Come now, Aristodemus, you who know so much about these things, tell me what is growth?"

But our critic is dead against the idea that things have come to be what they are from any originating purpose. He cannot abide what is called the teleological argument:

"Teleology has been destroyed by the Darwinian theory; but before the *Origin of Species* appeared, the slightest scrutiny might have shown that it was a precarious foundation for religious belief."

It is a dangerous thing, we take leave to say, to criticise Socrates, even behind his back. During the oppres-

sive reign of Darwin, it is true that the argument from purpose dropped out of the trembling hand of an intimidated philosophy. But that tyranny is overpast. Philosophy has come back to the Socratic wisdom. We doubt very much whether this critic could survive ten minutes' cross-examination at the hands of M. Bergson, and we feel comfortably assured that Socrates himself would have enjoyed a conversation with him as richly as he enjoyed any of the most playful colloquies recorded in the Dialogues of Plato.

Not only is common sense on the side of Socrates, but the latest philosophy, the latest findings of physical science. After all these years of wandering in the painful wilderness of fumbling guesswork we are back at the intuitive conviction of Leucippus (*circa* 500 B.C.) that *nothing arises by chance, but all things by reason and necessity.* The atom, to which Victorian materialism pinned its faith for confirmation of its mechanistic dogmatisms, has now been broken down, revealing to the disappointed mind of science a reeling world of invisible electricity—electricity which still eludes any definition at the hands of science. Evolution is no longer seen as the antithesis of teleology, rather as its synonym; no longer as the alternative of creation, but rather as its method. Evolution, we learn at last, is a movement with direction and intelligence, a movement from the simple to the complex, a movement from the crude to the more perfect—a *movement.* Once there was a chaos, then an amœba,

then a man, and then a Socrates. From the manifold and manifest achievements of this mysterious movement of life, purpose is a logical deduction. If we do not rely as surely as Butler did on the argument from design, at least we now speak with some degree of confidence of a teleology immanent in evolution. Life is seeking to achieve something.

Socrates, then, proved his wisdom by resting so serenely on the solid ground of common sense. The universe is organised: it is not a chaos. Life moves, and moves with a self-evident intelligence. There is a beauty in nature which is as definitely an achievement of life as the Gothic aisles of Westminster Abbey are an achievement of architecture. There is an order in nature which is as certainly good evidence for purpose as any enactment on the statute book. Things are not irrational. Man is not the sole possessor of mind. Let common sense give the verdict in this dispute: whether a blind and random evolution brought mind into existence, or whether a preceding mind ordained evolution?

Socrates in dialogue with Darwin would have stopped him at almost every step in his thesis, asking him to define such prodigious terms as "struggle," "growth," "origin," and "selection," needing no lovely tinted feather from the tail of a peacock to confute him with that eminent aspiration after beauty which is the very soul of evolution. The strength of all his thinking lay in a keen

perception of the *fact* which dangerous or cunning words attempt to describe and never can define.

We must not minimise one influence of Socrates that is generally regarded as dangerous. His method did, undoubtedly, encourage a fruitless rationalism. In men who had no inward life, who did not feel beauty like a passion, and whose sense of wonder did not move in them like a prayer, the Socratic method made for an unlovely form of agnosticism—a smooth and smirking agnosticism well-pleased with itself, and with no wistful longing for spiritual satisfaction. We do not quarrel with him for teaching that ethical and political problems can be solved by an appeal to the first principles of reason; nor do we think that a right-minded man would misunderstand his thesis that truth is to be reached, if at all, by analytic criticism of received opinion. But we can see that in practice—men being what they are—such a teaching would lead among the general to a barren agnosticism, and an unlovely temper. Only the noblest man of science, or the true saint, would understand the confession of Socrates that "he nothing knew save that he nought did know."

It should not be necessary, I think, to defend Socrates from the charge of obscurantism. It is true that he relied chiefly on intuition and common sense for his theory of existence. It is true, also, that like most Athenians

before the days of Aristotle he doubted the value of physical science. But physical science in the days of Socrates was science in the kindergarten: it meant guessing at the origin of the universe, an object condemned in these latter days by none more sharply and decisively than the physicist. Socrates only doubted the wisdom of spending one's life in such guesswork. He made fun of the people who mistook such airy guesswork for the firm ground of knowledge. He said that the great object of life was to live in communion with the eternal ideas of truth, goodness, and beauty; and of all the forms of truth that which seemed to him obviously the most important for mankind was the inward and spiritual truth of a man's personality. A true man seeking goodness and reverent before the majesty of the universe was the good citizen and the man most dear to God.

Did he fail? Yes, if his purpose was to save the political fabric of Greek civilisation. But it would seem that Socrates had no such purpose in his soul. His purpose was rather to create in the mind of the human race a living sense of the divine, to free it from superstition, to save it from intellectual vanity, to deliver it from all delusion. In this he has not altogether failed. The undulating ascent of humanity does indeed show the swift downward swerve to materialism, but always that descent is followed by the steep upward curve of idealism; and in all those periods of upward ascent the spirit of the

human race ever renews the freshness of its dawn in the tranquil radiance of Socratic common sense.

His spirit is unmistakably, I think, a characteristic of Anglo-Saxon personality. Until the days of Darwin the philosophy of our forefathers was marked by earnestness without austerity, by reverence and modesty without servility, by a robust common sense unmarred by the truculence of a little learning, misled by none of the shifts of pedagogic casuistry. The same playfulness which preserves for us the freshness of Socratic conversation is to be found in all the immortal pages of English thought. The one note which is absent there is that of cocksureness, a note which never issued from the soul of Socrates. And as Socrates was haunted by divine things, so were our forefathers; and as they laid their chief emphasis on an inward probity and not on any outward ceremonial, so also did Socrates. In all our Anglo-Saxon morality there has ever been that element of Puritanism which the effeminate Pater detects and dislikes in Socrates: a masculine and sturdy conviction that inward honesty is of more moment to a man and to a nation than pretensions however impressive and achievements however brilliant.

When we think of the character of Socrates we think of the highest type of Englishman. We think of his reliance on good sense; of his dislike of exaggeration; of his unfanatical religiousness; of his tolerance, of his self-

consistency; of his gentleness, his playfulness, his serenity, his unshakable fortitude, his unconquerable goodness, his courtesy. He meets us in Chaucer, meets us in Sir Thomas More, meets us in John Bunyan, meets us in Doctor Johnson. His spirit is our spirit. He is the soul of all that stands most firmly in the character of England.

We forget, in forgetting our Greek, that there were times in English history when the spirit of Socrates was more real to our fathers than the spirit of Shakespeare; when the qualities of his mind became the admired object of English character; and when the Socratic wisdom was the criterion for English wisdom. Our fathers saw in him a man to whom the existence of God was the supreme reality, who in the consciousness of that reality lived a cheerful and self-consistent life of pre-eminent goodness, and who met in the faith of that reality a martyr's death without a word of complaint and without a gesture which was not seemly. They came to think about him while their children played at being Hector and Achilles, and so they became like him. Our heredity reaches far back through the disordered ages of a quarrelling Europe and a warring Christendom to this calm and playful teacher of rational idealism.

Thus has the character of Socrates the same inheritance of immortality as that which Shelley felt in the poetry of Keats. It is made one with nature—our nature. It is a part of the civilisation of the human person. It is an indestructible power in the conscience of mankind.

CHAPTER II

THE AGE OF ARISTOTLE

(384–322 B.C.)

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In the year 366 B.C., Socrates being then dead thirty-three years, there came to Athens from the royal court of Macedon a delicate lisping youth of seventeen, with money to throw into the lap of folly and a desire to take his place among the fashionable young men of the Greek metropolis.

This youth, Aristoteles of Stageira known for that reason as the Stagirite, reminds us a little at the outset of his career in Athens of Benjamin Disraeli. He was an outlander in the eyes of those whose favour he courted, and he endeavoured to make an impression upon them by the extravagance of his dress, the richness of his jewels, and the cynical flippancy of his conduct. They called him "the vain and chattering Aristotle." But like Disraeli, the foppishness of Aristotle was by no means the whole of him; rather was it a ring on his finger, an ornament put on for the satisfaction of a nature ambitious of attention. Behind the fop was a man, and within the man a spiritual energy of commanding power.

By what means he was attracted to the school of Plato

we do not know; it may have been that he regarded it as a fashionable diversion, or that finding it impossible to keep pace with the athletic youth of Athens either in their vices or their games, he turned with a fresh vigour of ambition to a sphere of action which promised quicker access to distinction for so weak a stomach. In any case, we know that he soon turned from dissipation to philosophy, and that for twenty stormy years in Greek history he remained in the school of Plato.

Socrates, as we have seen, spent his life in redeeming the individual man. A grand simplicity was the mark of his teaching. He avoided all the pitfalls and the gins of intellectualism. No logician ever caught his soul in a trap, no metaphysician ever enticed his feet into a fog of words, and no politician ever deluded him with the minor passion of sectarianism. There he stood in the falling twilight of Athenian glory, his feet planted with unshakable firmness on the rock of common sense, teaching individual men to lean the weight of their lives on the eternal realities of existence, and bidding them search within their souls for the divine truth which alone could set them free from delusion. With smile, jest, and cunning question he brought to silence all the enemies of man's inward peace, not only the teacher of sensualism and the unprofitable politician, but even the philosopher of wisdom whose speculations spread their wings on words which darkened the plain daylight of common

Photo Alinari

ARISTOTLE

Rome, National Museum

sense. Like a mother, quieting the fears of her children, and guarding them both from dangerous animals and incompetent protectors, Socrates stood in that falling twilight of Athenian glory which, because of him, was to become the morning of a new civilisation, speaking of God and the soul, of right and wrong, of true and false, in speech as homely as ever fell upon Athenian ears.

His words and his personality have descended to us chiefly from one of his disciples who was at almost every point his heretic. Socrates sought to change the human being: Plato to change the world. Socrates never wrote a line: Plato was the author of numerous controversial books. Socrates never ventured into the territory of intellectualism except to expose its poverty and absurdities: Plato lived in no other country. An aristocrat of almost regal beauty, maintaining himself in a style of great dignity, falling into the sins of his time and class, teaching philosophy rather as an art than as a religion, Plato differs from the old Puritan stone-cutter his master as the climate of Jamaica differs from the climate of Scotland, or as the Gospel according to John differs from the Gospel according to Mark. Nevertheless it is from him more than from any other man that we get our Socrates; but it was the creative personality of Socrates, so rich in inspiration, which gave us our Plato.

Aristotle soon attracted the notice of this intellectual mystic who was seeking to reorganise the whole of human

life. There was between them an affection controlled by the knowledge of their mental differences. Plato would at one moment call Aristotle the genius of his school, and at the next laugh at him for seeking truth in books. "There is the house of the reader," he would say, in passing the dwelling of Aristotle, and go on to his own house, there to write books which he must have known would be read as long as men have eyes.

Like Socrates, Plato never read a manuscript. But while Socrates refused to read a book because the author was not by to answer questions, Plato in the power of his comprehensive intellect brushed the library away with a contemptuous disdain for all the toilsome knowledge of the past, artistically minded, with the Periclean world falling about his ears, to establish a new humanity on foundations of spiritual reality.

It would take a volume, indeed many volumes have already been written on the matter, to show the intellectual differences which separated Plato from Aristotle, differences almost as great as those which separated Plato from Socrates. Our purpose may be served, however, by seeing in this simple difference over books the fundamental divergence of soul which separated the two men, the master and the pupil, and afterwards separated the world of thought into two camps of Platonists and Aristotelians. "Every man," said Coleridge, "is born an Aristotelian or a Platonist. I do not think it possible that anyone born an Aristotelian can become a Platonist;

and I am sure no born Platonist can ever change into an Aristotelian. They are the two classes of men, beside which it is next to impossible to conceive a third."

Plato, until almost the end of his life, was faithful to the teaching of Socrates in one important particular: he sought truth with his soul. It was by introspection and by contemplation that he arrived at his theory of the divine reality. He studied things only to arrive at ideas. The visible caught his eye only that his soul might behold the invisible. Afterwards, it is true, he intellectualised the theory of a divine reality and committed it to writing, and involved himself in grave rational difficulties and many contradictions; but the sense of all his matchless writings was inspiration, the inspiration which comes from profound contemplation of living forms and a piercing vision able to comprehend the unseen idea breathing through the transitory shape of all things visible to the eye.

His teaching was also faithful to the Socratic tradition. Stripped of its luminous beauty of expression, and disentangled from its intellectual profundities, his teaching is the simple message of Socrates that behind every living form there is the divine reality of life itself, and that it is with this transcendent reality that the soul of man should be concerned. "We carry with us," says Sir Thomas Browne, "the wonders we seek without us"; and, forestalling Goethe and Carlyle, he adds: "There is

all Africa and her prodigies in us; we are that bold and adventurous piece of Nature, which he that studies wisely learns in a *compendium* what others labour at in a divided piece and endless volume." But whereas Socrates had no other ambition than to convert the individual person from folly to wisdom, from delusion to truth, Plato, on the other hand, was almost as contemptuous of the individual as he was of books, and sought by his teaching to establish a new humanity, or, at any rate, a new basis for the perfect state. He was a politician moving in the world of mathematics and a mathematician employing the language of politics.

Now, Aristotle himself is not to be set up against the mystical Plato as a materialist. He believed in God. For centuries, indeed, he was regarded as a chief pillar of Catholic scholarship. All the fragments left behind him after a life which still has no rival for wide-ranging industry have been turned over and over by the theologians of the Christian religion to justify their central position. It is true that the Church found out the mistake of the schoolmen and ordered Aristotle's works to be burned, and not only burned; their contents were ordered to be forgotten by those who had read them! But if the Church was afraid of him, the Arabs and the Moors were not, and to this day the Stagirite is foundational to the theological philosophy of those religious peoples.

Aristotle not only believed in God, he spent the best

powers of his brain in proving the reasonableness of the divine theory. Further, he was a teacher of ethics, in his own conduct a purer person than Plato, and his attitude to the universe, particularly to the stars, those bright worlds which thrilled him to poesy, is one of reverence and humility. In what respect, then, does he differ from his master? How has it come to pass that from teachers so like each other the world of thinking men has become divided into two opposing camps?

It is a question of method. While Plato debated the universe with his own soul, Aristotle consulted the writers of antiquity for information and discussed the structure of living forms and the habits of living creatures with fishermen and shepherds, huntsmen and peasants, travellers and sailors. Alexander the Great, whom he had tutored for a few years, sent to Athens from the lands his armies were invading specimens and information for the use of the Stagirite, who in his own house was watching the egg of a hen turn into a chick or writing an account of nest-building fishes.

Now if Aristotle had aroused the amusement of Plato by his habit of reading books, he courted the disdainful contempt of all the philosophers at Athens by this method of study. Indeed, it shows to us in Aristotle a courage scarcely less honourable than the courage of Socrates that he, an outlander from the hated court of Macedonia, should have thus braved the contumely of Athenian cul-

ture by descending from the peaks of philosophy to grub for knowledge in the base earth of natural history. Yet it was this method, so contemptible in the eyes of Athens, and destined to die out only a few years after Aristotle's death, which, reviving in the Middle Ages, eventually divided the world into two camps and brought the Stagirite to a throne of glory in the affections of modern Europe.

He was the first thinker of commanding genius to recall philosophy from star-gazing and day-dreaming to the facts of man's terrestrial existence. It was not what he said that changed the world; it was what he did. The theories of Aristotle have done nothing for truth, but the effect of Aristotle has been enormous. No thinker of such eminence ever made more bad shots at the truth of things than he did; no theorist ever went more journeys into blank absurdity than did this ravenous seeker of truth; but he studied nature, examined her, dissected her, classified her, brought her into an intellectual order, and thus not only created the new science of natural history, but laid the foundations of all the positive sciences.

Reflect that in launching his method on the sea of time Aristotle was more powerfully affecting the destinies of the human race than Alexander the Great at the head of his conquering armies. "Aristotle was, and still is," says Coleridge, "the sovereign lord of the understanding."

The two camps of Platonists and Aristotelians are now committed to the methods of the Stagirite. No longer does the philosophy of mysticism rely on the intuitions, no longer do the teachings of spiritual reality ignore the investigations of physical science. Aristotle is the world's great teacher, its sole teacher, of method; and it may be said that Bergson is as greatly in his debt for a spiritual interpretation of evolution as the schoolmen of the Middle Ages were his debtors for a theology which powerfully affected the destinies of Europe. Nevertheless, the influence of Aristotle has been chiefly on the side of materialism, and it is as the unconscious parent of a mechanistic philosophy that we must regard him in this chapter of the mind's history.

It is a curious fact that the father of materialism was opposed to nearly every doctrine on which materialism now rests—including the sphericity of the earth. He did not believe that the world has come to be what it is from something so vastly different as to be utterly unlike it, or that living forms had acquired their shape and their propensities from a long struggle with environment. On the contrary, he opposed himself to the Darwinism of his day, and taught with authority that everything man sees has always been from the first what it now is. Moreover, he would have nothing to do with any theory which leaves a door open on the universe for the entrance of accident; he believed in purpose as completely as So-

crates did, and criticised the ideas of Empedocles and Democritus which challenged the time-honoured principle of teleology. "Nature," he said, "makes nothing without a purpose." He admitted that the rational principle and moving force in the universe can be frustrated by the refractory and irrational material in which it works, but he insisted that this moving force does nothing without a rational purpose

When we examine his teaching to discover in what matter it so differs from Plato's that one is regarded as the fountain-head of mysticism and the other as the headwaters of materialism, we find that the difference lies in their conceptions of God. This difference, so formidable in its bare statement, need not, however, take us far afield from the straight path of simplicity. It can be reduced to the plainest expression.

Both these men believed in God; but while Plato brings Him everywhere, in the soul of man as well as in the starry firmament, in the heart and consciousness of humanity as well as in the uttermost confines of the universe, Aristotle set Him afar off in unimaginable distance from the earth, throned in a majesty and perfection inconceivably sublime, aloft the understanding of the human mind, and engaged in an act of everlasting self-contemplation from which the soul of man is of necessity excluded.

Ritter, Preller, and others assume that Plato's idea of the Good is much the same as Aristotle's deity, but where

in Aristotle shall we find such a teaching as Plato's that God, being good, wishes everything to resemble Himself? The effect of Plato, in any case, is to bring God near to the soul of man. Professor Burnet says of him that he has "left us the first systematic defence of Theism."

The inference from these two conceptions is obvious. The Platonist seeks to deepen, to heighten, to intensify his sensation of God, seeks, that is, as the supreme good of life, to make the nearness of the divine the centre of his consciousness. The Aristotelian, on the contrary, whether he choose to call himself atheist or agnostic, turns his attention away from a matter so remote that for him at least it is without reality, and endeavours to piece together such fragments of the creative Will which he finds scattered in multitudinous confusion over this little earth or in the shining fields of the stellar universe. He becomes, not the poet or the mystic, but the man of science—the astronomer, the biologist, the chemist, the geologist, the botanist, and the bacteriologist.

Aristotle, whose God was merely the source of movement, the First Mover who Himself is never moved, defined the soul as a principle of energy, without substance, and inseparable from matter. Yet, when he came to examine the intelligence of this soul he pronounced it to be indestructible, immortal, and divine. He does not separate soul from body, but distinguishes between the intelligence of the soul and the soul itself. The soul is the

marble from which the statue is chiselled, the statue is its intelligence. The soul is the eye, the vision of the eye is the intelligence of the soul. The soul is the seed, the intelligence of the soul is the flower. "It is further matter of doubt," he says, "whether soul, as the perfect realisation of body, may not stand to body as a sailor to his boat"—showing that his reason was in difficulty. Why did he not say that soul is to the body as the sculptor is to the marble or as the gardener is to the flower?

So far as this confusion can be understood at all, it would seem to argue that the *person* dies with the collapse of the physical organism and that the intelligent life, sans love, sans aspiration, sans memory, sans character, sans personality, returns to the unknowable Mover who Himself is never moved. Thus a man may feel he is immortal, may indeed inherit immortality, but cease to possess this knowledge and fail to be conscious of his inheritance when he has got it. In other words, death robs him of self-consciousness.

With such a conception of soul, Aristotle devoted his great powers of mind to rationalise conduct. None of his works has come closer to the bones and business of mankind than the Nichomachean Ethics. Here he sets himself to lead mankind into the path of happiness, using his practical reason and leaving immortality out of the account. It is a case of a grammarian coming on the scene after language has been spoken for immemorial

years, not to clear up the mystery of language, but to explain to mankind that this word is a noun, that a verb, and this again is an adjective. Virtue, we learn, is a synonym both for happiness and prudence. It is natural for a man to seek happiness, and in seeking happiness he is seeking virtue, and he has only to look about him to see that virtue is another word for prudence. Courage, for example, is a virtue; but if a man's courage lead him to run into unnecessary danger he ceases to be a prudent man and so loses his happiness.

The good man, says our philosopher, is at unity with himself, and what he desires, desires with all his soul, wishing for himself what seems, and indeed is, good; doing good—for it is his nature to work out that which is good—for its own sake; that is to say, for the sake of his reason, which appears to be a man's true self.

When we learn where Aristotle looked for his idea of virtue we perceive at once the defect of the Aristotelian temperament. He looked, and he directed his disciples to look, at that political aggregation of men which we call the state. There, for him, was the grand stage on which virtue might be seen in all its moral glory. A man had only to contemplate society in order to distinguish clearly between right and wrong, that is to say, between prudence and imprudence, between acts which were good and acts which were bad, between conduct which was wise or safe and conduct which was foolish and dangerous.

No great teacher ever looked so far afield from himself as Aristotle, no thinker was ever a greater stranger to his own soul. He broke away from the Socratic simplicity of introspection and intuition; he broke away, if not from Platonism, at any rate from the course of Platonic speculation. For the Stagirite, although he regarded the universe as a system of ideas, and saw in every species of created things an idea of the divine mind, still truth was a thing to be sought in the world outside the human mind, the physical and political world which existed rather for man's examination than for his contemplation. There he lived, and moved, and had his being, and even there only on the surface of things. Truly has it been said of this indefatigable observer of living things that the more he looked the less he saw. More clearly and decisively than any of his predecessors he observed the forms of living things, but never obtained "glimpses of the great maxims of creation, of the mysterious workshop of God." "Aristotle doth but instruct us," said Sir Thomas Browne, "as Plato did him; that is, to confute himself." He was the first indexer of the book of nature, the earliest curator of this terrestrial museum: never its interpreter. "What is all intercourse with nature," asks Goethe, "if, by the analytical method, we merely occupy ourselves with individual material parts, and do not feel the breath of the spirit, which prescribes to every part its direction, and orders, or sanctions, every deviation by means of an inherent law?"

We must be careful to distinguish, however, between Aristotle himself and the materialism which has since proceeded from his method. The Stagirite taught that man is a free agent, and that he is responsible for his conduct, which ought to be of the highest order. "If virtue depends on us," he says, "so does vice; whenever it is in our sole power to do a thing, it must also be in our power not to do it; whenever we can say No, we may also say Yes."

There is no fatalism here, no determinism, and no blurring of the line which separates good from bad. Indeed, Aristotle, in spite of his defective method, is one of the world's greatest moral teachers. Even if he bids us look, not within, but at the stage of politics for our idea of virtue, he is careful to teach that "Society originates in the need of a livelihood, but it exists for the sake of life." And when we come to ask him what he means by the term "life," we discover that he regards existence as a work of art, and that life is that energy of matter which is for ever seeking to fulfil itself, the statue emerging out of the marble and the flower emerging out of the seed. He never, in spite of all his wanderings, lost sight of the intelligence in creation, or of the purpose which runs throughout the works of nature. If his great object was to reorganise all knowledge, still he saw the soul of man as the crown and glory of creation, and believed in its perfection if not in its immortality. "The soul," he said, "is the real world."

He overlooked man's conscience, but he glanced at his will, finding it to be the nature of the soul, as much the soul itself as the marble is the statue. When the will is expressing itself without impediment and without rashness, that is to say, when its action utters its true nature, then it is happy; and he distinguishes between the happiness of the good man and the bad man, between the happiness which ensures an ultimate satisfaction and the happiness which can only end in a sense of discordant disappointment. In a hundred ways he lays himself open to the attack of the materialist who has followed his method to a conclusion which makes a chaos of the universe and whose practical reason has been used to make nonsense of all law and all purpose. But for Aristotle himself, there was a rational gulf between the good man and the bad man, and a clear call of the reason to choose the higher rather than the lower.

If Socrates had been by his side when he spoke of "the will," and if challenged, as surely he would have been, by that old humorist to reflect upon so strange a term, and to attempt to define it, it is possible that Aristotle might have left posterity with a clearer, a less cloudy notion of the soul, and with a more hopeful incentive to right action.

Our admiration for the man must be almost boundless. He is far nearer to us than either Socrates or Plato: less eccentric than the first, of a nobler conduct

than the second; and, after all, his method is that method of science which has enriched modern life in a thousand directions and given man a command over nature which, on the whole, is for the great benefit of the human race. He is the practical man looking out on nature to understand her ways, finding in the study of physical things a deep pleasure as well as a path of hope to greater knowledge of the mystery which haunts us, living a good life, and meeting its adventures with a sweet and genial tolerance. We see him walking in the garden at Athens where he taught the truth he loved even more than Plato —both were dear to him, he said, but truth the dearer— walking as he taught, for the sake of his health, and then returning to his wife and children in whose love he rested with a gratitude that persisted to his life's end.

That his position at Athens must always have been one of great difficulty is clear to us when we reflect that while he listened critically to the lectures of Plato, Demosthenes was striving to rouse the degenerate Athenians to a sense of their danger from the Macedonian phalanx marching under the one-eyed Philip from victory to victory on the Thessalian plain, threatening the achievements of Pericles with shame, and the wealth of Athens with ruin. Further, after the assassination of Philip in 336, his son Alexander the Great, the pupil and the friend of Aristotle, became master of Greece. Difficult indeed must have been the position of the Stagirite in that doomed and quarrelsome city, whose soil, as

Demosthenes said in the bitterness of exile, nurtured three strange monsters, the owl, the snake, and the people.

He was a man who followed wisdom in a time of unparalleled crisis, who was liberal and generous, who never forgot an obligation, whose courage, though it could not face martyrdom, did resist prejudice of a most powerful order, and whose heart, rejecting the idea of immortality, sought goodness with a disinterested affection, and without cynicism and without compromise.

If we see him in history with less admiration than we see him in the shaded walk of his Athenian garden, it is because of the disastrous effect of his method on men of smaller stature. The father of Peter Bell may well have been an admirable botanist. Aristotle's method was a right method, but it was only partially right. He was right to study nature, but wrong to confine his study to the outside of nature. He was right to insist on the value of investigating living forms, but wrong to leave out of his investigation the life which gave them their philosophical significance. He was right in his feeling that physical research would lead to a vast extension of knowledge but wrong to divorce that form of inquiry from the Socratic discipline of introspection.

Well has Mr. Alfred Benn said of him that wherever he has to observe or to report, to classify or to compare, whether the thing be a mollusc or a mammal, a

mouse or an elephant, he is only a little way below the level of creative genius; but wherever the line between the visible and the invisible, the appearance and the reality, has to be crossed, there his powers are suddenly paralysed, as if by enchantment.[1]

"Yet what a mind was Aristotle's!" exclaimed Coleridge—"only not the greatest that ever animated the human form!—the parent of science properly so called, the master of criticism, and the founder or editor of logic! But he confounded science with philosophy, which is an error."

Because of this fault in his method humanity has often wandered into the wilderness of materialism, far away from the promised land of creation; and if from these wanderings it has returned with many curious specimens for its museums, and many instructive theories for its text-books of physical science, and with many valuable contributions for wealth-seeking industrialism, still, forgetting what Signor Ferrero calls "the great doctrine of Aristotle which sets forth that the supreme aim of a State is neither riches nor power, but virtue," it has increasingly lost something of that spiritual apprehension which dignifies human life and nourishes the soul on the sublimest of the hopes of its self-consciousness.

[1] *The Greek Philosophers.*

What bard,
At the height of his vision, can discern
Of God, of the world, of the soul,
With a plainness as near,
As flashing as Moses felt
When he lay in the night by his flock
On the starlit Arabian waste?
Can rise and obey
The beck of the Spirit like him?

Yes, and not only the prophet, not only the exceptional man, but the simplest of humanity's millions:

What girl
Now reads in her bosom as clear
As Rebekah read, when she sate
At eve by the palm-shaded well?
Who guards in her breast
As deep, as pellucid a spring
Of feeling, as tranquil, as sure?

With the triumph of physical science there has been loss of intellectual peace, and with man's conquest over nature there has been loss of spiritual power. Many have made the discovery that it is indeed possible to gain the whole world and yet to lose the soul alive. Many are beginning to think that the realism of physical science is the realism only of superficial appearance. "I wish they would explain their explanations," cried Byron, and Darwin was yet to come.

Turn from Aristotle's vain attempts to define the great First Mover and to elucidate the functions of the human soul—turn from these intellectual perplexities to the answer of the dying Socrates when Crito asked him how he would wish to be buried:

"Just as you please, provided that you can lay hold of me."

CHAPTER III

THE AGE OF JESUS

(*Circa* B.C. 3–A.D. 33)

CHAPTER III

THE AGE OF JESUS

(*Circa* B.C. 3–A.D. 33)

THE power of Greece did not long outlive the last of her great philosophers. A little more than a century after Aristotle's death a fleet anchored off Athens representing a people with which no statesman in his time had reckoned, a people not from the east, but from the west.

After subduing Italy, beating back her hereditary enemy the Gauls, and at last conquering the stubborn Carthaginians, Rome subjugated Greece, and from that point of vantage began an eastern extension of her Empire—an empire radically different from any other in the history of mankind.

The Assyrian or Egyptian conqueror of other nations had endeavoured to make fast his victories by breaking up the peoples his sword had subdued, carrying off numbers of them to work as slaves in his own country, driving others into exile, slaying their chiefs, shattering the altars of their gods, laying waste the proudest of

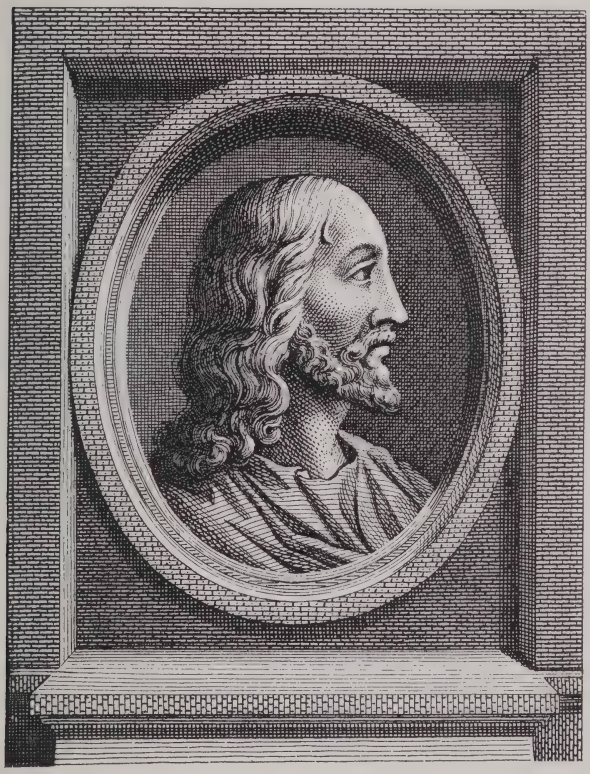
their cities, and planting out their lands with people from his own dominions.

The Romans followed another method. They destroyed only the military power of the nations conquered by their legions. In other respects the national life was left to follow its traditional course. The Romans remained to keep order and to assist in the development of trade. Wherever their eagles went they established peace, and wherever their armies encamped they reaped ideas.

Thus it came about that this proud and powerful nation, giving peace to the world and laying the foundations of material progress, became the humble disciples of Greek philosophy, employing the Greek language for all the polite purposes of life, and absorbing into their crude religion rites and ceremonies which were already old in the days of Romulus.

When Greeks visited Rome for the first time the sight which most astonished them was the great central city drain, *cloaca maxima.* It was a symbol more wonderful in their eyes than the martial eagle. It stood for a new idea in the human mind. It represented a region of thought never penetrated by any of their philosophers. It signified a field of policy which their statesmen had entirely overlooked.

Rome was the first engineer among the nations, the first practical intellect among the peoples of the earth. She cherished an ideal of human comfort which had



JESUS CHRIST

From an old copper print

never before prescribed itself to the mind of man. All her imperialism, the noblest of its kind, was founded upon a rational domesticity. It was not her mission to interfere with the rulings of the gods; it was not her ambition to promote the interests of any one god in particular. Of philosophy she was ignorant. To penetrate the secrets of personality never occurred to her. The truth with which she concerned herself was bounded by the domestic life of man. To rationalise that life, to make it prosperous and comfortable, to make it safe from sword and pestilence, to give it a sense of abiding security, this, and this only, was the Roman mission.

Among the many peoples brought under Roman power and benefited by its superior physical culture, were the Jews of Palestine, a race whose history is a very considerable part of the history of mankind.

The Jew was a person who looked back to a fabulous past and forward to an impossible future. He looked back to a time when his fathers talked to God, when one of his kings ruled over peoples as numerous as "the sand that is on the sea-shore," and when the one true God whom his ancestors worshipped had constantly interfered to make Israel the terror of the heathen and the envy of all nations. He looked forward to a time when this same interposing God would deliver him from the hand of all his enemies, set up the throne of Israel on a

foundation which should never be shaken, and place upon that throne one of His celestial creatures formed in the likeness of a man, the anointed one, the Son of Man, who would reign over all the nations of the earth.

This Jewish view of history was the consequence of a past filled with calamity. Israel had never been a great power: it had always been one of the little nations—those little nations over whose territory broke constantly, almost incessantly, the bloody tide of war, and into whose pious domestic life was thrust again and again the terrible enslaving hand of a heathen imperialism. Rich in family love, proud in the consciousness of a moral God infinitely superior to the wicked gods of other nations, and passionately devoted to his fatherland, the Jew learned to hate great empires with an exceeding bitter hate, and in the power of this excessive hate learned, not only to bear his wretchedness and misery, but to make himself the most troublesome of all the little nations swept up into the net of imperialism.

At the time of Jesus, this intense racialism was expressing itself in three chief ways. There was the great school of the Pharisees teaching the Jews that if they wanted God to break the chains of Rome and set up the throne of Israel over all the earth, they must see to it that the Law was obeyed in every minute particular, that sacred Law which God Himself had given to their forefathers, obedience to which had always brought freedom and prosperity in the past, and would again, disobedience

to which had always brought the retribution of defeat and slavery.

Another party in the nation was of the opinion that God would help them only if they first helped themselves. They charged the Pharisees with an unmanly spirit of defeatism, and went about stirring up the people in secret, laying plots to entrap Roman soldiers, conspiring to make the position of the Roman procurator impossible, working underground for a national uprising. These people represented the party of physical force; they were the descendants of a school called by Josephus the Fourth Philosophy; their heirs were the Zealots, and finally the movement disappeared in the bands of Sicarii, who dealt in assassination and whose object was a reign of terror.

With these so different forms of thought went the world-renouncing school of the Essenes or Esseans, who retired to the shores of the Dead Sea, and there, as Pythagoras had done in Southern Italy five centuries before, formed themselves into societies apart from the world, living, it is thought, as vegetarians and communists, waiting in a spirit of prayer for the coming of God's anointed one, the Son of Man.

To all these three schools of racialism there was a party in the nation almost as odious as the Roman power itself, namely, the rich and aristocratic priesthood, who, as everybody could see, "had it both ways," enriching themselves from the patriotic instinct of the

Jews, and enriching themselves still further by acting as agents of the Roman conqueror. To the Jew, who must needs worship in the synagogue, and who must needs go up to the temple in Jerusalem, these proud and wealthy priests presented a problem of the supremest difficulty. They were at once the representative and the traitor of Israel's God.

Jesus was born in Nazareth or Nazara, a little town in Galilee, which is the northern province of Palestine. It stands on the side of a hill, from whose summit a view of great beauty extends to the mountains of Samaria and to the blue waters of the Mediterranean. The town itself, composed of one-roomed cottages built of mountain stone or burnt clay, rose in steep terraces on the hillside, with fig-trees and palms between them, and with vines clambering over the walls. The chief building was the synagogue; the friendliest place of meeting, the well.

The people who lived here, small merchants and artisans, derived their meagre wealth from the people of the surrounding country, the petty cultivators, the shepherds, the vine-dressers, and the hired labourers. It would seem that Jesus, as the eldest son, must have made many journeys with his father, who was a builder, into the villages round about Nazareth. Nazareth itself could hardly have supported a family of at least seven children. The most authentic records concerning him are pictur-

esque with his references to country sights and occupations, as if these things had early impressed themselves upon his mind, and were there suggesting themselves to his consciousness, even when he was most absorbed in spiritual teaching. He had seen the vulture hovering in the azure deep of the Syrian sky, and the hen mothering its chickens in the dusty courtyard of little white houses blistered by the sun; he had watched the sparrow on housetops and listened to the cooing of the dove; he had observed the husbandman sowing grain over his stony fields, had noticed the tares springing up with the wheat, had marked the differences between good land and bad. He had seen the labourers going up and down with their baskets between the vines. He had listened to the farmers who prophesied what weather was to come from the colour of the clouds. He had watched the fox making for its earth, the snake gliding away into undergrowth murmurous with the buzzing of bees, the wolf lurching towards the mountains, and the hooded shepherd carrying the lamb in his arms down the hillside. He had also, we may surely think, brought home with him for his mother, in hands all dusty white from the shaping of stones, little nosegays of wild flowers gathered in the fields—flowers more richly apparelled in his eyes than Solomon in all his glory.

If in after life he retired frequently to mountains for prayer and meditation, it is probable that he learned this

habit in boyhood, and often climbed to the heights above Nazareth, either to think out the problems of youth or to escape from the disturbances of a crowded home and a noisy town. Certain is it that he had a feeling for nature which never manifests itself in Greek literature, and which is found in later Roman literature only among those whose minds were not tormented by divine things. No great teacher before his time had this beautiful background to his life. One may say that it explains, or helps us to understand, if not an essential part of his teaching, at least that wonderful serenity of soul which is so striking a characteristic of his world-shattering career.

When he was nearly thirty years old, and had taken the place of his dead father in that little household at Nazareth, the political life of his fellow-countrymen was brought to a sudden tension by the appearance of a prophet.

The last of the prophets had long been dead. The Jew who wanted prophecy consulted his scriptures, pored over them, read into contemporary references hints of a time that was yet to come—a terrible desolation for his enemies, a glorious autocracy for him. Prophecy had become a matter of literature, not of life. God was no longer speaking to His people. But here, all of a sudden, was a man from the wilderness, strangely garbed, wild living, and passionate, who was speaking to living Jews as even the dead prophets had never spoken to their fore-

fathers, delivering to this present day a message from their God.

The nature of that message fell like a new harmony into the discordances of Jewish life. It united all the parties. "Repent!" Every Jew acknowledged that God's interposition was hindered by the sins of His chosen people. "Let us prepare our souls," Baruch had said, "that we may have hope, and be not put to shame, that we may rest with our fathers, and be not punished with our foes." And now the time was at hand. A prophet had risen once more in Israel. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Every Jew was expecting the divine visitation. Who, then, could object to the sign which this new prophet required of those who confessed their sins and protested a desire for their remission? Crowds of Jews hurried to the Jordan, entered those sacred waters just as Indians enter Ganges in our own day, and were washed clean of their sins. Some were mere patriots eager to hasten the arrival of Messiah and to see the impious Romans broken before all nations; but many belonged to the quiet country Jews who lived remote from the centre of politics, and were truly hungering after the bread of righteousness.

Among these last came Jesus, and was baptized by John, and immediately retired into the wilderness. When he next came among his friends and neighbours it was with a message. The builder had become a prophet. "The time is fulfilled," he said. "The Kingdom

of God is at hand. Repent, and believe the good news."

He offended the priests of Nazareth, and went out into the countryside. He drew a number of young men about him, and together they moved through Galilee, telling people that the Kingdom was at hand, the Kingdom of God on earth, and that Messiah would reign. Jesus described his message as good news. He laid great emphasis on the point, that his hearers must believe this good news. He spoke of himself as a prophet.

His mother and his brothers came to the conclusion that the preaching of John had affected his mind. They endeavoured to bring him home, to put a stop to this preaching which had offended the dignitaries of their local synagogue, and was now offending other synagogues in Galilee. But Jesus persisted in his prophecy. The time was truly at hand.

It is clear that he had not entered upon this prophetic mission without earnest thought and without an assurance that it was the will of God. During his retirement in the wilderness he had so deepened his consciousness of the divine that it seemed to him as if God Himself was present in his soul. He became aware of unusual power. He felt that he could do extraordinary things. For a moment he was almost carried away by the suggestion that perhaps these strange powers were given to him in order that he might free his country from the Roman yoke and establish the throne of Israel. But

this idea he put away from him. A greater loomed into his mind. John was right: the people of Israel must repent. The Kingdom of God could come only to hearts that were cleansed of all sin. It would be brought to earth only by souls that hungered and thirsted after righteousness.

The greatest prophets of Israel had always sounded this Socratic note of inwardness.

The most authentic of our records makes it quite plain that in preaching to the villagers of Galilee, Jesus exercised an unusual spiritual power over their minds and bodies. It is as certain that he cured some people of diseases and delusions, as that he failed, because of their unbelief, to cure other people. It is certain that beyond the announcement of the coming Kingdom—it was even important that this good news was to be received with faith—he laid a new and unusual emphasis on the mystical power of belief. Indeed, some minds have come to think that the sole uniqueness of his teaching, apart from the beauty of personality informing it, lay in its disclosure to the human race of a power within the soul which by union with God may become the master of circumstance.

It is most true that he accepted the Jewish eschatology; he believed in the end of one age, and the beginning of another—a better age in which the will of God would be done on earth as it is in heaven. But those critics

who insist upon this mistaken belief, and who become so obsessed by it as an explanation of the tragedy which was so soon to end in the hateful city of Jerusalem the beautiful idyll of Galilee, overlook, I think, the extreme importance of the Master's preaching of inwardness. If he said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," also he said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." If he announced the coming of desolation, he also revealed the extraordinary power of prayer, and exalted the exquisite emotion of love. On no just reading of the documents, with all their difficulties and contradictions, can the figure of Jesus be shown as a fanatic, or even as an enthusiast. There is always apparent in the Galilean a serenity higher even than that of Socrates, a tranquillity which is as compelling in Mark as it is in John, a restfulness as real in Matthew as it is in Luke.

All the documents which have employed the scholarship of Europe for so many centuries must be torn up, the authentic as well as the faulty or the forged, before the historic Jesus can be made to appear in the imagination of men as a person of unstable mind carried away by the delusion of an approaching world catastrophe.

It is in Mark that we read: "And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me. . . . Suffer the little children to come unto

me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

It is in Mark, too, that we read three great tolerant and unfrenzied sayings: "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath"; and "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's"; and "He that is not against us is on our part."

Further it is in Mark that we have the dialogue with the scribe as to which is the first commandment of all:

"And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God."

These utterances, occurring in the record most pervaded by the idea of a world catastrophe, make it impossible to think of Jesus as a fanatic, and make it difficult indeed to conceive of him except as a calm and gracious spirit inspired by the profoundest quietism. The whole record of Mark, indeed, is the story of a new

spiritual power in human life, manifesting itself with the quietness of a faith so deep that it seems to us like knowledge. Jesus, we may say, uttered his warning of the world's approaching end—refusing always to predict its date—in a tone of such compelling love that it rather breaks down the heart of the strongest than raises a tremor in the mind of the most timorous.

That his chief insistence was on the need of an inward and spiritual change in man, may be seen clearly and conclusively in all his controversies with the Pharisees. He opposed himself to these guardians of the sacred Law, not that he wished to set that Law aside, but because their interpretations of it made for an unimaginative formalism fatal to any real hunger and thirst after righteousness, to any vital progress in spiritual life. The washing of pots and cups and brazen vessels, indeed the whole ritual of the altar, moved him to contempt. "There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear." It was a revolution he was announcing. The soul of man was to deal direct with God. That soul was to be unafraid. It was to be childlike in its attitude, as a child with its father. But it was to be searchingly honest with itself. It was to search for its own faults rather than to observe the sins of others.

He simplified the whole Law, reducing all the minutiæ of its multitudinous enactments to the first and greatest of all the commandments, love of God; but he made that love something so tremendous and real that it became a power of infinite and unimaginable competence. "If thou canst believe," we read in Mark, "all things are possible to him that believeth"; and again in Mark, "Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be removed, and be thou cast in the sea, and shall not doubt it in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

If these utterances are found in the eschatological gospel of Mark, the earliest and least corrupted of all the gospels, who can doubt, first, the profound serenity of the Galilean's soul, and, second, that the source both of his attraction and of his power was an inward and spiritual life without parallel in the records of human personality? Moreover, how are we to account for the early hostility of the priests to the message of Jesus—remembering that he never once publicly announced himself as the Messiah—if we leave out of our consideration the surely most striking fact that he preached repentance not to the religious, but to the outcasts of society? And if he did that, how is it possible to think of him as a

deluded man crazed by the idea of an approaching cataclysm? When the skies are about to fall the condition of a beggar's soul would hardly catch the attention of an excitable preacher.

Do not let the reader suppose for a moment that I wish to abridge in any degree whatever those passages in the primitive gospel which attest the conviction of Jesus that the end of an age was at hand and that the birth of the Kingdom would be attended by dreadful horror. My purpose in dwelling on the serenity of the Master, the serenity of the historical Jesus, is to bring this undoubted fact of his teaching into its proper place in his life, not to overwhelm the soul of the man with one of his ideas. Like almost all the Jews of that time, Jesus carried in his mind a sense of approaching doom; like Baruch he felt that the youth of the world was past and the strength of creation exhausted, that the ship was nigh unto the harbour, that the pilgrim was reaching the city, and that life was close unto its end; and there were moments when this conviction overpowered him; but regarded as a whole, his life was one of singular peace and gentleness, characterised by a tranquillity which is hardly to be matched in the history of religion, and inspired by a feeling of relationship to the divine which is not to be found in the history of the whole world. Let us remember, when we think of his illusion, that he disappointed the hopes of John the Baptist and sought the unhappy among the lowest of the people.

The preaching of Jesus attracted great attention in Galilee, and created enemies for him among the Pharisees and Zealots, but it did not bring him within reach of the law. It was only when he arrived in Jerusalem for the first time that he committed an act which was fatal to his mission.

Up to that moment the brief career of Jesus, almost a haunted career, had been marked by occasional manifestations of popular favour and an unalterable, an implacable official disapproval. He wandered with his disciples through the fields and villages, without a home and without any sense of security, hunted out of this place, ridiculed in that, and heard gratefully here and there only by the outcasts and a few enlightened people who came to him with the furtiveness of shame. The Pharisees hated him as a renegade, and the Zealots as a pacifist. It was only among the simplest of the people that his miracles created astonishment, and only in the hearts of the humblest and the saddest that his words found a refuge from the turmoil of controversy. Even his disciples were doubtful of him—doubtful as to his mission and doubtful as to his message, which only a few of them understood. His life was one of abiding solitude of soul. The only companion of his spirit was the voice from heaven. Whenever he was overtaken by an extreme of sorrow or halted by a doubt as to what he should do next, he left his disciples and retired into the hills for prayer.

Before we approach the tragic end of this beautiful life, let us be certain that we understand the soul of its teaching. Jesus, we must remind ourselves, had never used, and had never heard, the Greek name of Christ. When he spoke of himself he used the term Son of Man. He never made any claim to a unique birth, and never encouraged his disciples to regard him as anything but human. Like all Jews, the centre of his faith was the supremacy of one righteous God. To suppose that the coming of Messiah was God Himself, or a mysterious division of God, never entered his mind; if it had, it would have been driven forth as a blasphemy. The Messiah was to come from God, and was to be a supernatural person, but he was not to be like any of the strange creatures which figure in the religions of the heathen; he was to be in the likeness of man—*bar nasha* —a Son of Man.[1]

This was the undoubted faith of Jesus. Towards the end of his career, when his disciples were attacked by doubt, and were growing weary of their long wandering from village to village, Jesus suggested to them that

[1] In Aramaic "Son of Man" signifies simply a human being, and has no mystical significance as it has in Greek or English. Dr. Kirsopp Lake thinks it probable that the phrase in the earlier chapters of Mark is a misunderstanding for "a human being." He points out that on any other assumption the "therefore" is meaningless in the sabbath incident: "Therefore the Son of Man is lord also of the sabbath." Clearly the text should read: "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath; therefore man is lord also of the sabbath."

perhaps the Messiah might come not only in the likeness of man, but as a man, that perhaps God might even accept him, Jesus, because of his great faith, because of his spiritual teaching, as the Messiah who was to make the will of God done on earth even as it is in heaven. If more was said, it was said in secret, and certainly conveyed to the mind of most of the disciples that Jesus himself was uncertain about it.

Further we must remind ourselves that Jesus had no dramatic promise to make to those who shared his homeless wanderings. His teaching, indeed, although expressed in the simplest words, made the sternest of demands on human nature. The love of God is a phrase which comes easily to the lips; but how hardly does that love enter the heart of man. Sin is not difficult to resist when a man has mastered the animal; but who can banish every thought of sin from his soul? Repentance is natural; but who can say from his heart that he would rather maim himself than do that sin again? Aspiration is common to every son of man who has not strangled his conscience; but how many hunger and thirst after righteousness? In all his teaching, Jesus made this transforming demand on those who heard him. He had no thrones in the age which was to come for those who shared his sufferings and his confidence; only the injunction, Be ye perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect.

If he held the idea of an approaching end to the world,

he held it lightly in comparison with his greater idea, which did indeed overmaster him—the idea of the soul's direct relationship with God and the absolute need of truth in the inward parts. He was much more a preacher of righteousness than a prophet of calamity. Moreover, he was much more a rational teacher of righteousness than a preacher of emotion; he told men that what they sow that also must they reap, and that there is a law in the spiritual world as inexorable as any law of nature. Certainly until he set his face towards Jerusalem, the ceaseless effort of his beneficent nature was to turn the hearts of his countrymen away from the deceits of materialism and to give them the new life of an inward and spiritual perfection. It was as a prophet that he set out to preach; it was as a prophet that he found no honour in his own country; it was as a prophet that he went up to Jerusalem.

Few moments in history are more moving than those which witnessed the arrival in the sacred Jewish capital, the seat of the aristocratic priesthood, of this Galilean preacher with his humble and sceptical followers, and a small crowd of excited people from the lowest orders shouting that a prophet had come to Jerusalem. The provincial disciples were overwhelmed by the city's impressive magnificence, and Jesus had to reassure them with the claim that if all those crowding synagogues were overthrown he could raise them up again by a word. Then they approached the temple, the chief glory of their

nation, a wonder of the world. To the disciples this must have been the severest test of their faith in Jesus, perhaps the test under which Judas broke down. How could Jesus hope to oppose himself to so magnificent a power as was symbolised by this mighty temple of white marble and shining gold, with its Corinthian pillars, its great cloisters, its wide courts seething with people, its noble stairs leading up to lofty porticoes and the great porch with its golden vine? How could their leader, dusty and tired from his journey, hope to overthrow the historic priesthood of Israel?

But Jesus saw what the disciples did not see. He saw the tables of the money-changers, saw the poor people humbly changing their Roman coins into Jewish money, and knew that the priests ordered this traffic that they might make a profit on the transaction. He saw the people buying doves for the sacrifice, lest the priests should pronounce their own offerings to be blemished, and knew that the sellers of those doves paid a commission to the priests. His serenity deserted him. Here was the very thing he had come out to destroy. He threw himself into the midst of this sordid bartering, overturned the tables of the money-changers, drove away those that bought and sold, and pronounced Israel's sacred house of prayer to be a den of thieves.

This act of righteous indignation sealed his doom. He might have preached the coming of the Kingdom in

every synagogue crowding the narrow streets of Jerusalem without incurring the murderous wrath of the priests; but to declare in the sacred temple, the headquarters of the priesthood, that these aristocratic priests were a set of thieves, this, because it was true, this, because it threatened their financial security, this, because it struck the most deadly blow at their vested interests, was the challenge that led to the cross.

To arrest Jesus without being certain that they could secure his execution would have been disastrous. A man so determined and so courageous would of a surety return to the charge, not with twelve frightened countrymen from the north at his heels, but perhaps with the rabble of the city, the pariahs whom Pharisee and Sadducee excluded from Israel's religion. The city, whose normal population was 50,000, now housed perhaps a million people, for it was the great feast of the Passover. The priests, therefore, afraid of a riot, conspired against him in a manner which is still common in the East. There was the rumour of a reward for evidence which would lead to the arrest of this noisy fellow from Galilee, and secret inquiries made as to his mission among those who followed him, probably intimidating inquiries: "You had better look out for yourself, the priests know something about this Jesus; if they decide to arrest him, you may be arrested too."

Judas decided to betray him. Perhaps he had lost

faith in Jesus, perhaps he was only a coward thinking of his own safety. In any case he gave the priests the information that they needed, startling information, information almost too good to be true. Jesus, it appeared, was not only a militant Essene or a socialistic prophet; he had confided to his disciples the secret belief of his soul that when the new age came, God might choose him to be the Messiah.

This was such patent blasphemy that the priests hesitated no longer. Even the rabble would howl at him when this was known. Jesus was arrested, tried on the charge of blasphemy, and hurried to his death. In the incident of the Prætorium, reported by the faithful Mark, we may see how effective the disclosure of Judas had been. The Roman soldiers clothed his body, still quivering and bloody from the scourge, with a purple robe, and made of thorns a mock royal crown and pressed it over his head, and bowed their knees before him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Afterwards they smote him, and spat upon him, and took off the purple robe, and put on his own garments, and led him, so weak that he could not carry the cross, to Golgotha, the place of execution. And there, his disciples having fled back to Galilee, he was crucified with a jest of the Roman procurator hanging above his head—THE KING OF THE JEWS.

"And at the ninth hour," we read in the primitive record, "Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama

sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Thus ended a life destined to change the history of mankind more deeply, more widely, and more permanently than any other from the beginning of time until this present hour.

Brief as our summary of that career has been, I do not think there is one reputable scholar who will seriously dispute its substantial accuracy.[1]

The life of Jesus was the life of a prophet profoundly aware of, profoundly moved by, the unhappiness of humanity, and profoundly convinced of a divine mission. That he erred as a man is as clear to us as the fact of his death. That he did not realise the manner in which his life would be fulfilled is as certain as the fact that his disciples deserted him. But truly it may be said that if the life of Socrates was a life of inspiration, and the life of Aristotle was a life of observation, the life of Jesus was supremely a life of revelation.

From him, as from no other teacher in the world's history, men have gathered an idea of God which has proved itself to be the greatest force in the only civilisa-

[1] I am reminded that as late as 1904 a Pope of Rome issued an encyclical in which he announced that "the Hebrew patriarchs were familiar with the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, and found consolation in the thought of Mary in the solemn moments of their life." Such is the incredible power of self-deception in minds which are honest but irrational. When I speak of reputable scholars I mean competent judges whose devotion to truth may justly be compared with even the same spirit in the man of science.

tion which endures the changes of time and survives the vicissitudes of life, the civilisation of the human soul. And in him, as in no other man, humanity has found an ideal of character before which the noblest of the sons of men in all generations since his day have bowed their heads. All the crimes of history committed in his name, all the superstitions of paganism which have flocked to his worship for final sanctuary from the advancing nemesis of science, cannot obscure the beauty of his life nor darken the radiance of his revelation.

If there is a God who cares for the fortunes of this planet and is mindful of His creature man, then we must say that no historic person has ever shown Him to humanity with a more lovely reasonableness and a more authentic assurance than the Galilean whose name of Jesus stands for God's Helper. And by showing Him to humanity in so compelling a manner, a manner which has attracted the greatest of men as well as the lowliest, Jesus gave to the world an authority in the sphere of morals which is higher than any sanction of philosophy or politics, and the only authority except the policeman which can keep the forces of anarchy at bay.

There is in the teaching of Jesus a simplicity greater than that of Socrates, and yet a profundity that goes deeper than that of Plato. He seems most perfectly to have mastered the realisation of the Psalmist that the statutes of God give wisdom unto the simple—the highest

conceivable wisdom to the humblest of minds. His parables are as exquisite and unlaboured in phrasing as anything in the literature of the world; and they wake the same spiritual response in the mind of a peasant as they do in the mind of a scholar. No one in the history of man has made so triumphantly as Jesus that appeal to the human heart which liberates life from the domination and deceits of environment, and bestows upon it the increasing consciousness of the immortality of spiritual values.

CHAPTER IV

THE AGE OF AUGUSTINE

(354–430)

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(354–430)

A NOBLE simplicity of character distinguished the Roman from other people. Less imaginative than the Greek, he was more practical; less curious or inquiring, he was more stable. The Greek had no feeling for nature; the Roman found not only happiness but occasions for art in the business of garden and orchard, farm and vineyard.

Greek mythology suggests to the modern reader a scandalous chronicle of fashionable society; Roman mythology, on the other hand, is an apotheosis of the middle classes. The one might have been the creation of Horace Walpole; the other of Jane Austen.

This simplicity of character enabled the Roman to arrive at a unifying principle for his politics. He believed in aristocracy. No theorist preaching equality of men could have found a hearing in Rome during the greatest days of the Republic and the Empire. Men

were not equal in physical strength or in mental power. There was a best among men as there was among cattle. It was an obvious advantage to the state that the best should rule.

Because of this simple and practical faith in aristocracy, Rome advanced with small difficulty, over the chaos of a world without fixed principles, to a dominion as beneficent as it was glorious. In the Senate, rather than in the Emperor, lay the secret of her disciplined legions and the unity of her state. Those admirable senators, whose sole occupation was the care of the Roman world, exercised power in an atmosphere of unquestioned loyalty. They provided the Roman people not only with just laws, but with ideals. To live simply and strongly, to speak truth and to act with honesty, to be fearless and calm, patriotic and obedient, this was to be a Roman.

Thus it came about that while the Roman legions pushed their conquests farther and farther afield, the Roman ideal of human character began to spread itself through the world. In countries where she made her firm roads, built her great bridges, carried her vast aqueducts over desolate plains into the midst of crowded cities, laying everywhere the foundations of a world order which was manifestly to the advantage of trade and peace, there too in her representative she set up this new ideal of human character—a man who did justice fearlessly, who lived without Asiatic pomp, who was accessi-

ST. AUGUSTINE

From the painting by Pietro Gandido

ble and trustworthy, and who was a true master because he was an honourable servant.

So long as these men lived Rome was unconquerable. The legions looked up to them, the citizens looked up to them, the aliens looked up to them; and the Emperor, whose election the Senate alone could ratify, also looked up to these Roman nobles, these guardians of the Law, as the highest authority in the state.

Unhappily for the peace of the world and the advancement of moral ideas, this greatest of all political experiments in the ancient world came to destruction in the fifth century of the present era. The causes of that vast disintegration, thanks to the labours of innumerable historians in all the nations of mankind, may be summarised in a few words. First and foremost, there was a deficiency in the number of patricians for an empire of so great a size. The old, upright, fearless, and frugal order had to recruit its ranks from those whom we should now call the new rich—men who had no traditional sense of responsibility, whose lives had been spent in self-advancement rather than in unselfish administration of just law, men to whom ostentation was a finer thing than simplicity, and wealth a greater possession than culture. These men, making a breach in the walls of Roman character, enabled the barbarians to pour in a stream of ideas fatal to political strength, fatal to intellectual evolution, fatal to moral progress.

Superstition in its crudest and basest form invaded

Roman character, driving out not only the noble Stoicism which had been adopted from the Greeks, but the original simplicity of the Roman mind. From Egypt, where "it was less difficult to meet a god than a man," and from demoralised Greece, where the orgiastic worship of Bacchus and Dionysus had been condemned by intelligent people six and seven hundred years before, and even from the desert wastes of Arabia where the priest and his dancing boys could throw unlettered savages into frenzied convulsions not unlike epilepsy, indeed from every part of the empire where magic still survived the criticism of Greek intellect and the contempt of the old Roman common sense, superstition invaded Rome and preyed on the soul of that mighty empire like a leprosy.

The decay of a virtuous and intelligent aristocracy destroyed the unifying principle of Roman politics. The Senate became contemptible. Individual adventurers, finding themselves no longer opposed by an impregnable authority at the head of the state, pursued the road of selfish ambitions, and sought by conspiracy and violence to reach a throne of autocracy. Dicipline deserted the legions. Soldiers came forward as emperors. Civil war made its appearance. Murder, assassination, and revolution dominated the politics of an empire visibly dying for want of moral energy, for want of a directing authority strong in the reverence and loyalty of a contented people.

Emperors arrived who spurned the Senate and sought

to find a unifying principle in the Asiastic idea of the divine right of kings. They called themselves gods; they wore crowns which shone with the light of precious stones; their breasts and their shoes blazed like the sun which they worshipped as the symbol of the supreme Jupiter; they shut themselves up in palaces and surrounded themselves with a mystery never before practised by the greatest of their predecessors; in their presence men prostrated themselves on the ground, and in the temples they were worshipped with awful rites evolved from the long history of paganism and idolatry.

They sought in another way to secure the fabric of Roman power. They dismembered the empire, and created more Augusti and more Cæsars to rule over the several fragments. They multiplied the number of officials. They debased the coinage. They admitted barbarians into the army. They imported an Oriental vulgarity into art and sought in megalomania for the principles of an architecture which would make the capital city the crowning wonder and the inspiring terror of the world. Further, they sought to secure loyalty at the centre of the empire by diminishing the average Roman's manful sense of responsibility and encouraging in him a fatal sense of parasitical dependence.

Here and there an effort was made to revive the culture of the old Greco-Roman civilisation. Schools were set up, professors were patronised, learning became a fashion, and in Alexandria at least knowledge was

regarded as the true end of a man's life. But these efforts were in vain. Rome had surrendered to Asia, and Europe was left to barbarians. The aristocracy had gone down, taking law, discipline, and simplicity along with it; and in the midst of the anarchy which broke out on that tragic fall of the national will, an anarchy which vulgarised art and corrupted the domestic virtues, a new ferment began to work, destined to nullify all the patchwork efforts of men like Claudius and Diocletian to save the Empire from destruction.

This new ferment was the religion which we now know by the name of Christianity. Soon after the death of Jesus, his followers, who had fled back to Galilee, heard rumours that his spirit had been seen in Jerusalem. They were told to wait in Galilee till he appeared to them. When they did return to the capital city it was as men who had seen a vision and received an irresistible command.

They established themselves quietly in Jerusalem, faithfully fulfilling their religious duties as Jews, attending for worship in the synagogues, and outwardly differing from their fellow-countrymen only in a form of communism which ordered their private lives. They were expecting the end of the world and the reappearance of Jesus as the King of a new world. In their opinion, which is so often misrepresented even by responsible writers, Jesus had not legislated for a world on its

death-bed: he had prescribed only for its peace of mind. He had sought to free its last moments from an anxiety which, because those moments were its last, was clearly irrational. Therefore these disciples had all things in common, and waited for the coming of Jesus with minds entirely detached from the business of human life. They wrote no books. They made no records of the Galilean ministry. The end was at hand.

For some time they were regarded by the priests with contempt. They were treated by authority as harmless faddists who left alone in their own synagogues would do no more harm than the Esseans on the shore of the Dead Sea. But presently there came to Jerusalem Jews who had lived in Greece and whose minds had been freed from the iron formalism of the Jewish ritual, some of them regarding the sacred Law as an allegory. Many of these Hellenised Jews were attracted by the teaching of the disciples, and some of the more enlightened of them saw in that teaching a truth deeper than was apparent to the limited understanding of the Galilean fishermen.[1]

With the conversation of these Hellenised Jews there came a new vitality and also a new courage into the little synagogues which waited for the return of Jesus. The priests scented danger. A number of Pharisees were detached for special service against the sectaries. One

[1] It is useful to bear in mind that the Jews of Palestine were less numerous and much poorer than the Jews of the Dispersion—that is to say, the Jews who had settled in cities throughout the Near East and established themselves as a power in the commerce of the world.

of the boldest of these Hellenised Jews was stoned to death. One of the most vigorous of the persecuting Pharisees was converted to the new faith.

Then began on the earth, already old with controversy, a crucial struggle in the region of ideas—the struggle between Hebraism and Hellenism, between tradition and evolution, between the altar and the leaven. Peter stood for the maintenance of the Jewish character of his faith; Paul, fresh from successful journeys among foreigners, argued with him for an extension of that faith to include the whole world. The conversion of a Roman centurion helped to decide the issue. Peter, albeit with no great enthusiasm, capitulated to the insurgent oratory of Paul. Material facts began to tell in the favour of Hellenism. The little body of the circumcised faithful waiting in Jerusalem for the return of its Master became dependent on the charity of uncircumcised foreigners for its revenue. Communism had failed. "The world did not come to an end, but the money did."

It was in its contact with Greek superstition that the teaching of Jesus first assumed the character of a world religion. Its morality was not altogether unlike the morality of Stoicism, its history lent itself to a Platonic interpretation. Heracleitus had described the supreme law of nature as the Logos, or Speech, of God; the Stoics had developed this idea, and Philo had made the Logos the power and goodness of God; what more natural, then,

that the Greeks should see in Jesus a fulfilment of this great idea? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Moreover, humanity was then afflicted by a world weariness, which was strangely favourable to a new religious impulse. All the most odious forms of magic and necromancy which were filling the Roman world with frenzy had at least this excuse, that they witnessed to a hunger and thirst on the part of mankind for moral cleanness. None of those superstitions was imposed on the world. Each one of them came at the call of human nature for defilement and terror—but defilement longing for cleanness, and terror longing for security. The priest with a chalice full of blood, the priest swinging his rattle and whirling in a dance, the priest seizing a virgin in the sight of a congregation, these were men who supplied a demand of degenerate nature for an orgiastic ritual which was nevertheless a sacrament of spiritual life. To see the flowing of blood, to witness the expiatory death of a fellow-creature, to eat the flesh and to drink the blood of a sacrificial animal, to take part in any ceremony symbolising the very ancient idea of the death of a god and the consumption of his body by those who desired to be godlike, this was not only to indulge one's appetite for abomination and horror, but to take away in one's shuddering body and quivering nerves a sense of security from the attacks of maleficent powers, even a sense of regeneration.

It was in this atmosphere of gross superstition and world weariness that the teaching of Jesus became the religion of Christianity. Greek genius, which had fed itself upon the morality of Socrates and the idealism of Plato, ignored in that teaching every element which was local, accidental, or realistic, and fastened with a fervent quickness of intelligence and a creativeness of imagination wholly unknown among other people upon all those elements which were of a permanently philosophical character. To the Greek, Jesus was an incarnation of God; such an idea presented no difficulty to his mind: the resurrection symbolised the rising of the spiritual man from the death of sin. The world was not coming to an end for the benefit of the Jews; what was coming to an end was an age of darkness; and the new millennium was for the advantage of the whole human race, Jews and Gentiles, bond and free.

The Greek had no word for the strange Hebrew term of Messiah: it was a word which could not be translated and which could not fittingly be applied to Jesus by any nation except the despised Jews, whom the Romans regarded as runaway slaves from the Egyptians; therefore the Greek convert had to invent a word for Jesus, a word which he could not have understood as a title, for his kings had never been anointed, but a word which for him had the significance of a healing ointment, a remedy smeared on the body of a sick person. Jesus was therefore called Christ—the Anointed One. To this name

the Greeks added a title more or less equivalent to our term of Lord, and he became known, not as Rabbi, the appellation by which he was chiefly called in Galilee, or as Son of Man, which had no more meaning for the Greek than it has for us, but by the phrase Kyrios Christos. He was Lord Christ, and those who followed him were Christians.

The pure and ennobling character of Jesus might have been lost in the paganism whose worst orgies and most contemptible superstitions his moral teaching at least tempered and refined, but for a remarkable movement in the human spirit which began in the second century and reached a new point of departure for mankind with the crash of the Roman Empire at the beginning of the fifth.

Among the converts to Christianity in the latter half of the second century was a scholarly man named Clement, who had the wit to perceive that if God raised up prophets in Israel there was no reason to doubt that He also raised up prophets in Greece. If Moses was inspired, so too was Plato. This admirable thesis he taught in a school in Alexandria, and among his pupils was a greater man than his master, who developed the idea and carried it forward into the third century. It is due to Origen, more perhaps than to any other man of the period, that Christianity began to move away from the baser influences of Syrian mythology and Greek super-

stition to the higher inspiration of Athenian philosophy. Yet it was Origen who borrowed from Greco-Asiatic cults those ideas of mystery which gave to Christianity a sacrificial character. The Cross of Jesus became the altar of Christ.

Soon after the death of Origen another and a far greater scholar from Alexandria, Plotinus, so shy that he stammered in his discourses, so modest that he would not have his portrait painted, and so delicate that he had to study his plate like a physician, set up a school in Rome for the revival of Platonism. He refused to join the Christians, but he developed an idealism from the teaching of Plato which bore a remarkable resemblance to the teaching of Jesus. His influence not only drew the educated pagan away from unmanly superstition, but in later times was even deemed to throw a philosophic light on the simple and childlike Christian documents. When he lay dying he said to a friend for whom he had long been waiting: "The divine in me is struggling to go up to the Divine in all"; and as he gave up the ghost, it is said that a serpent crawled from under his bed and disappeared into a crack in the wall. In Porphyry he left a disciple who carried on both his teaching and his stern morality. No man of that time came nearer to the Puritanism of Socrates. Porphyry hated the Christians and wrote against them, but he helped to keep Hellenism alive even if he mixed it with a perilous Chaldæanism characteristic of that demon-ridden time.

Thus the spirit of Socrates rose from the dead and appeared among men and together with the spirit of Plato became an unconscious servant in the house of the Galilean. The "glory" of Greece had long ago departed; but ere Rome fell, plunging the whole world into a long darkness, the light of Hellas returned to earth and became a lantern to the feet of a new European civilisation struggling with the powers of Asiatic darkness.

This new religion answered the cry of the human spirit for self-surrender and absorption into the divine. Men whose hearts almost broke under the devilish cruelty, the abhorrent animalism, and the defiling superstitions which proclaimed loudly enough the dying of paganism, fled away into the wilderness and worshipped God in a solitude which, for them, was the completest form of companionship. The number of these natural saints was presently swelled by fanatics who had heard wonderful tales either of their austerities or of their visions. Some of those people did indeed, as Byron said of one of them, attempt to merit heaven by making earth a hell, and many no doubt, in the bitter words of Gibbon, "aspired to reduce themselves to the rude and miserable state in which the human brute is scarcely distinguishable above his kindred animals." All sort of absurdities existed, from "the humble practice of grazing in the fields of Mesopotamia with the common herd" to the bestowal by the Church of the title of "Mother-in-law of God"

on a wealthy Roman matron who gave her daughter to be "the spouse of Christ" and herself became a builder of monasteries. But this movement began in genuine holiness, a state of mind which has been admirably defined as "thinking holy thoughts," and with the rise of monasteries which it brought about went the preservation of learning, while every monastic establishment in the dying world, whatever its inner discipline, or whatever the motives which brought men there, did at least stand for an ideal which had the power to save the human race from self-destruction.

It came about, then, that the Roman Emperors presently found themselves obliged to take into their political consideration a new religion. The proclamation which made Mithraism the official religion of the Roman world was a dead letter. In a few generations an Emperor ruled over the world who was a Christian. Arian Christianity was the religion of the dying empire—a Christianity which did not make Jesus one with the supreme Deity, but which accepted his moral teaching as a revelation from God and exalted him as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind.

From its early days Christianity had brought to birth a new moral idea. Whatever its merits, that idea was fatal to the first principles of the Roman Empire. All men are equal in the eyes of God. Mercy and pacifism were the marks of a true Christian. To give to the

poor, to nurse the sick, to care nothing at all for one's own social advancement, to be mindful only of moral perfection, to see in the slave or the leper a brother whose soul was dear to God, and in the emperor a blasphemer who dared to arrogate to himself the dignity of the supreme Father, this was to be a faithful follower of Jesus and a bad Roman citizen. Hospitals were built; revenue was collected for charity; churches were formed in all parts of the Empire to protect the humblest Christian from the punishment he courted in refusing military service or any public office in the state. It is true that many base people were numbered among those early Christians, many pariahs and outcasts, many "untouchables"; but the strength of this mighty body was unquestionably the joyous faith with which the highest minds of that time hailed the demands of a new morality. When Arianism was denounced and the Church declared Jesus to be of the same substance or essence of the self-existing First Cause, Christianity, with its vast organisation and its innumerable followers, was the greatest power in the Roman Empire.

In the year 410 those citizens of Rome who lived in the neighbourhood of the Salarian Gate were awakened one night by "the tremendous sound of the Gothic trumpet." The queen of cities, the mistress of the world, that great and eternal metropolis which for long centuries had never suffered the desecration of an invader,

fell that night without a blow to the hosts of Alaric. To most Romans, even the most degenerate and Asiatic, this inexpressible shame seemed like the end of the world. "No doubt," wrote the monk Jerome from his cell in Bethlehem, "all things born are doomed to die, and that which has grown to maturity must grow old. Every work of man is attacked by decay, and destroyed by age. But who would believe that Rome, victorious so oft over the universe, would at last crumble to pieces, the mother at once and the grave of her children? She who made slaves of the East has herself become a slave, and nobles once laden with riches now come a-begging to little Bethlehem. In vain I try to draw myself away from the sight by turning to my books. I am unable to heed them."

To one man at least, however, the tremendous sound of the Gothic trumpet came, not as the last trump, but as the réveillé of a new world. For him Alaric was no harbinger of the world's destruction, but rather an unconscious angel of God, the herald of Europe. This man was the Christian Bishop of Hippo, Augustine.

He had been born in the year 354. His father was a person of violent temper, but his mother, a Christian from birth, was a woman of singular gentleness, so that her husband did not beat her, to the wonder of other matrons. The character of this woman Monica helps one to understand the triumph of Christianity better than many a theological treatise. From her, Augustine in-

herited a hunger and thirst after truth which was to rescue his life at long last from the ruins threatened by his paternal inheritance—a violence of the passions for many years quite ungovernable.

His boyhood gave no promise either of distinction or virtue. He was rather stupid as well as incurably vicious. "It appears," says Bayle, "that he was what we call a Rake; he shunned the school as the plague; he loved nothing but gaming and public shows; he stole all he could from his father; he invented a thousand lies to avoid the rod, which they were obliged to make use of, to punish his licentiousness." In spite of the rod, however, and even in spite of the prayers and entreaties of his mother, Augustine, who was destined in the purposes of God to shape the civilisation of the world in an hour of perilous calamity, continued to live so whole-heartedly in the ways of debasement that perhaps to his life's end he was never free from the coarsest tendencies of human nature. But at the age of nineteen a book by Cicero awakened the intellectual curiosity of this young rake, and before he was twenty he read with avidity a Latin translation of Aristotle's *Ten Categories*. To his carnal obsessions was now added the spiritual vice of ambition. He decided to make a name for himself. He threw aside with contempt the documents of his mother's religion, adopted the doctrines of the Manicheans, and set out to become a master not only of all knowledge but of all mystery.

For ten years he was a student of this school of

necromancy, founded by a Persian painter who announced himself as the Comforter promised by Jesus. Gradually he lost faith in it, and for some years suffered that terrible torture of the mind which afflicts all passionate seekers of intellectual certainty. He continued to live with no moral principles while he was seeking with his tormented spirit this pillow of repose for his distracted reason. "In disputing with unlearned Christians," he said afterwards, "I had almost always the ill fortune to get the better of them; which frequent success still added fresh fuel to the heat of my youth, and hurried me headlong into that greatest of mischiefs, obstinacy."

At last he found peace for his intellect, but not for his passions. He came under the influence of Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, who made an impression on him, but could not give him the mathematical proof of Christianity for which he was seeking. However, still under the moral influence of the pious bishop, he presently came upon the works of Plato for the first time in his life, which enkindled in him, he tells us, "an incredible conflagration." For a little while he thought he had found rest for his soul, but reading the epistles of Paul in the light of that Platonic conflagration, and haunted by the phrase so continually on the lips of Ambrose, "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life," he yielded to the Galilean, and was baptized by Ambrose in the presence of his mother, Monica, who came to Italy for

this satisfaction of her beautiful soul, on Easter Eve, the 25th of April, 387.

Alaric, we must remind ourselves, though a barbarian, was a Christian. Among the captives carried off to Germany from former raids into Italy there were numerous followers of the new religion, and among them, or as a missionary to them, was one Ulfilas, whose character made so great an impression on the Goths that they renounced their dark gods and embraced the hope of immortal life offered to them by this follower of Jesus. As it happened Ulfilas had been transported during the reign of Arius, and accordingly all these Goths were converted to a Christianity which did not identify Jesus with the supreme Father in Heaven. They therefore found themselves in Rome to be, not Christians, as they had supposed, but heretics; while the conquered Romans were stung to fury, if not to pious zeal, at finding themselves treated by these base barbarians who dared to call themselves Christians as "the sectaries of Athanasius." Thus it came about that the clash in Rome at the beginning of the fifth century was not only a clash of arms but a clash of ideas, not only the clash of a corrupt and perishing civilisation with a new and hardy, if barbarian, manhood, but the clash of hostile theologies, both of whose disciples followed the Galilean with a sword. Christianity had conquered the world; her only enemies were those of her own household.

To Augustine, in his African bishopric, the fall of Rome, as we have said, did not appear so lamentable and despairful a catastrophe as it appeared to Jerome, nor did he regard it, like so many pagan Romans despoiled of their goods, as the end of all things. To his penetrating and comprehensive intellect, this fall of the mightiest power in the annals of the human race seemed rather a blessing than a disaster. Something great had indeed fallen, something once splendid had indeed toppled into ruins; but there was still the firm earth beneath those tumbled stones and broken pillars, and on that same earth might be erected an empire so great and so splendid that in the burning light of its ascension the former glory which had passed away would seem like the fitful glimmer of a candle.

He conceived the idea of Christendom. On the ruins of Cæsar's throne was to arise the chair of God's vicar, and on the foundations of physical power were to stand the everlasting walls of spiritual brotherhood. A new authority was to reign over human life—the moral law. No such dream had ever before entered the mind of man, and so inspired was Augustine by this vision of a new world order that he devoted the rest of his life to making his idea at once the policy of the Church and the aspiration of mankind.

Few books have so powerfully affected the destinies of the human race as the *De Civitate Dei* of Augustine. In spite of an interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures

which to us is ludicrous, and a theory of the universe got entirely from the Jews, and a theology which for the modern scholar is fallacious in its first essentials, this book, which has done so much evil and so much good, did nevertheless create the idea of a spiritual kingdom on earth and did put humanity on a road which was its best way of escape from the ruins of Roman civilisation.

It is true that Augustine, because of his faulty theology, suggested to the Church a direction which was bound to end in imperialism, and gave an impulse to the leaders of Christianity which was almost bound to land them in tyranny and despotism; but even if it be true that all the tragedy of the Church's brutal effort to secure temporal power and to stamp out with an iron heel the freedom of the human mind may be traced back to Augustine, still it must be clearly understood that Augustine himself never conceived such an idea, while he did contribute to the fortunes of humanity an idea which helped it to lay the foundations of a new civilisation and which, if realised, would even now reduce the ruinous chaos of European politics to some semblance of order and intelligence.

But the great good of this remarkable book lies, almost unconsciously, in its liberal tendencies. Augustine had to make war on the philosophers, and he made war as a philosopher. Bitterly as he may speak of heretics, and contemptuously as he may refer to the superstitions of even great Greek philosophers, including Plotinus and

Porphyry, he is almost a Platonist himself in dealing with Plato. Porphyry might "float between the surges of sacrilegious curiosity and honest philosophy," but Socrates was "the first that reduced philosophy to the reformation of manners," applying his mind to a "set and certain invention for an assistance unto beatitude," so that the mind "unladen of terrestrial distractions might tower up to eternity"; while as for the philosophy of Plato, who saw in the contemplation and worship of God the supreme good of life, "some of our Christians admire at these assertions of Plato coming so near to our belief of God, so that some think that at his going to Egypt he heard the prophet Jeremiah."

Augustine, it may be said, never mentions the name of Plato save with respect, often with reverence, and occasionally with the affection of one great mind for another. The effect of this attitude towards Platonism was to keep alive in the Church, at a time of great theological narrowness and in an age seething with superstition, the beautiful and liberal spirit of Hellenism. Traditionalist as he was in so many respects, and most of them fatal respects, in this respect at least Augustine was a Modernist, that he admitted philosophy into the house of faith. If from him tyranny received its excuse, and temporal power its ply, from him also theology received that evolutionary impulse which has saved Christianity from the provincialism and obscuratism of the sacerdotal pagan. In the West, at least, the leaven

of Christianity has been allowed to work, and the long evolution of this the most noble of all the religions of mankind is by no means at a halt.

It is important to remember, too, that if Augustine set the Western Church on its great journey believing in a Christ only a little more historically true than the Adam and Eve in whose existence he found the genesis of the incarnation, he also gave her the most conquering truths for her warfare with a blundering world.

Throughout his book rings the affirmation that the love of God is the end of man, and that in the love of God can man alone find happiness. Moreover, he sweeps away the pagan theory of "pleasing God" by worship and sacrifice. "God has no need of men's cattle, nor any earthly good of his, no, not his justice." The worship of God is for man's advantage, not for God's satisfaction. "One cannot say he does the fountain good by drinking of it, or the light by seeing it." Is it not written, "Pity thine own soul, and please God"? Throughout his pages one finds this keen perception of the most essential truth of all religion, and it is with his heart almost singing with the joy of his discovery that he quotes the great words: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, and with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,

or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for the transgression, even the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of thee: surely to do justice and to love mercy, and to humble thyself, and to walk with thy God."

It was largely owing to Augustine's insistence on love, mercy, and humility as the first elements in the religious life that Europe came into being from the ruins of Roman civilisation with a beautiful tenderness and a gracious chivalry consecrating the vestiges of a noble Stoicism which happily for mankind survived the downfall of the Empire. To him more than to any man in that period of world calamity belongs the eternal honour of giving to humanity a new conception of manhood—a manhood which preserved all that was best in the civilisations of Athens and Rome and illuminated all that was most enduring in the religion of Christianity. This new manhood was founded upon the morality of Jesus.

One of the greatest of Roman Catholic scholars in recent years, Lord Acton, once wrote to Bishop Mandell Creighton a letter which contains a passage of singular importance to the student of ideas. It is a fashion among those who lean their Christianity on rites and ceremonies, and who maintain that the centre of this religion is the mystery of the Eucharist, well-knowing its late and pagan origin, to depreciate both preaching and the moral teaching of Jesus. But Acton wrote: ". . . That would

imply that Christianity is a mere system of metaphysics which borrowed some ethics from elsewhere. It is rather a system of ethics which borrowed its metaphysics elsewhere."

CHAPTER V

THE AGE OF ERASMUS

(1467–1536)

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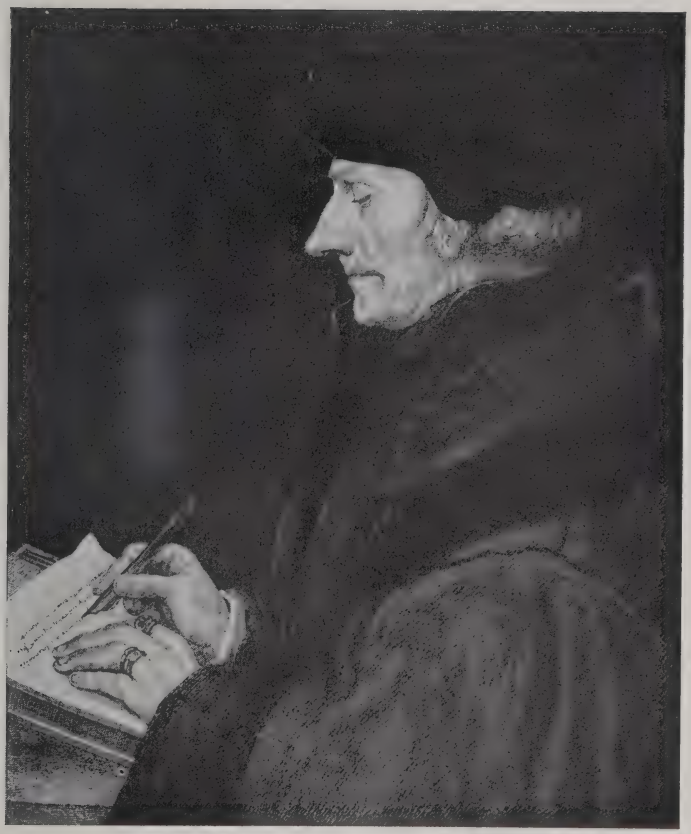
(1467–1536)

THE dream of Augustine came to the brink of fulfilment. With the fall of the Roman Empire there was in Europe no one rallying-point for the moral and spiritual forces of humanity save the Christian Church—that "little corner of rationality" in the world of dangerous animalism. By the nobility of its moral teaching and the attractive character of its earliest apostles, this strange religion, which had been evolved from the prophecies of Jesus in Galilee, gradually became an authoritative power of international good omen. But while devoted monks leavened the ignorance and brutality of barbarism with the incomparable ethics of Jesus, creating an entirely new set of values for the human mind, turning men's eyes from earth to heaven, and their hearts from selfishness to unselfishness, Popes and Christian kings, impatient of the leaven's slow fermentation, sought to extend the dominion of Christ and the empires of their own temporal power by means of the sword.

Far too much has been made of the paganism which corrupted Christianity and the religious imperialism which disgraced the Dark Ages. These evils are obvious enough: so obvious, indeed, that the very existence of Christianity at the present time should warn us against the dangerous error of seeking there for the true threads of historical continuity. Paganism did, of a truth, take command of the machinery of the Church, and, of a truth, the sword was seldom out of the hand of Pope and Emperor; but the force which conquered the world and came so near to fulfilling the dream of Augustine was the ethical message of Jesus preached and lived by humble men whose characters were like a new music in the soul of humanity.

It may be well to suggest, if only in passing, that the evolutionary principle, if valid in the spiritual sphere, may most fittingly, and of course most reverently, be applied to Jesus of Galilee. Those who earnestly believe from patient and unselfish research of the Christian documents that Jesus looked for the end of an age, that he anticipated the interposition of God on the Cross, and that he gave up the ghost in a moment of tragic desolation of spirit, bitterly and desperately disillusioned, are nevertheless entitled to believe that he realised after death a deeper meaning in his unique consciousness of unity with God, and that ever since Calvary his divine spirit has been growing, not only in the knowledge of God's



ERASMUS

From the portrait by Holbein
Original in the Louvre

purpose, but also in its own power to help the human race towards the consummation of terrestrial existence. This is to say, that there is no reason in logic for those who hold the spiritual thesis of life why Jesus of Galilee, of an exquisite loveliness in character, but limited both in knowledge and power, should not now be regarded as the Christ of God, a continuing Christ who is for ever, with a power that for ever increases, inspiring the soul of humanity.

And so, therefore, with the history of the Church. At first the disciples waited for a physical return of their Lord, living as communists in the midst of a perishing world; then, with a newer understanding, and greater inspiration, the spirit of Greek philosophy penetrated the Church and gave it a catholic sympathy, a pagan colour, an almost universal appeal; and then, with success, came the temptation of "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," to which the Church fell with direful consequences for mankind. But from the first movement of this new spirit in human life the real evolution was moral, and that evolution, working in the hearts of men like Benedict and women like Monica, saved the secret of Jesus not only from the paganism of the Christian altar but from the Christian sword of Charlemagne and from the atheisms and iniquities of the Bishops of Rome. The idea of Jesus lived on. The character of Jesus moved upon the face of the waters of the Dark Ages, and Jesus breathed into the nostrils of heathen

Europe the breath of a new life, that humanity might become in the process of evolution a living Christendom.

At the time of Erasmus the Church had sunk to an almost inconceivable depth of moral and intellectual depravity. The monasteries, which had done their greatest work in saving the wreckage of Greek and Roman culture, which had kept the lamp of learning alight in an age of universal darkness, and which had saved some of the greatest of the arts from destruction, were now, for the most part, in a state of torpor, well-nigh bestial, and certainly of little use to the struggling conscience of Europe. Erasmus, for example, who was brought up in a monastery, found that he might get drunk as often as he chose, but that he must not study. So far as England is concerned, this decline of the monastic orders, according to Sir Thomas More, was a hundred years old at the dawn of the sixteenth century. The English monasteries, let us remind ourselves, were condemned by a commission appointed by the Pope.

Yet everywhere in Europe men existed who saw that Christianity was essential to the safety and welfare of mankind. In England, beyond all question, this spirit was stronger and more courageous than anywhere else throughout Europe. Wycliffe and Langland witness in the fourteenth century to the moral earnestness of the country, and men like More, Colet, and Fisher in the

early days of the sixteenth century were before everything else profoundly Christian. So, too, at the beginning of his illustrious reign was Henry the Eighth, "the most deeply read and the most nobly intentioned of all the English Kings," according to More, and, according to Erasmus in 1519, "Future ages will tell how England throve, how virtue flourished in the reign of Henry VIII, and how the nation was born again, how piety revived, how learning grew to a height which Italy may envy, and how the prince who reigned over it was a rule and pattern for all time to come." He wrote from Louvain to an English friend:

"Oh, splendid England, house and citadel of virtue and learning! How do I congratulate you on having such a prince to rule you, and your prince on subjects which throw such lustre on his reign! No land in all the world is like England. In no land would I love better to spend my days. Intellect and honesty thrive in England under the Prince's favour. In England there is no masked sanctimoniousness, and the empty babble of educated ignorance is driven out or put to silence."

And again he writes:

"The King is the heartiest man living and delights in good books. The Queen is miraculously learned for a woman, and is equally pious and excellent. Both of them like to be surrounded by the most accomplished of

their subjects. Linacre is Court physician, and what he is I need not say. Thomas More is in the Privy Council. Mountjoy is in the Queen's household. Colet is Court preacher. Stokesly, a master of Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and scholastic theology, is a Privy Councillor also. The Palace is full of such men, a very museum of knowledge."

He sums it all up in a letter from Antwerp in May, 1519:

"The world is waking out of a long sleep. The old ignorance is still defended with tooth and claw, but we have kings and nobles now on our side. Strange vicissitude of things. Time was when learning was only found in the religious orders. The religious orders nowadays care only for money and sensuality, while learning has passed to secular princes and peers and courtiers. Where in school or monastery will you find so many distinguished men as form your English Court? Shame on us all! The tables of priests and divines run with wine and echo with drunken noise and scurrilous jest, while in princes' halls is heard only grave and modest conversation on points of morals or knowledge. Your King leads the rest by his example. In ordinary accomplishments he is above most and inferior to none. Where will you find a man so acute, so copious, so soundly judging, or so dignified in word and manner? . . . Who will say now that learning makes kings effeminate? Where is a finer soldier than your Henry

VIII, where a sounder legislator? Who is keener in council, who a stricter administrator, who more careful in choosing his ministers, or more anxious for the peace of the world? That King of yours may bring back the golden age. . . ."

All this is true enough of the times when the words were written. Never has a greater man than Henry the Eighth sat on the English throne, greater in scholarship, greater in courage, greater in self-reliance, and greater in that mysterious spiritual force which we call personality. At the dawn of his reign he was the most accomplished prince in Christendom, one of the strongest men in his kingdom, one of the gladdest spirits in all the world. Yet he had in him seeds of egoism fatal to character. The duplicity of his brother kings, and the cowardice of the Popes of Rome, gradually darkened the original brightness of his candour, and brought him at last to an egoism which, while it saved England, spoiled the wonderful promise of his earlier character, and shattered the great dream of Augustine. Tragically true is the final verdict of his fairest historian, Mr. A. F. Pollard: "Every inch a King, Henry VIII never attained the stature of a gentleman."

But the panegyric of Erasmus, while it is true of the English Court in the opening years of this fateful century, obscures the truth of England's national life.

Men, emerging from all the losses and confusions

of the Wars of the Roses, had chiefly one thought in their mind on the accession of Henry the Eighth, the thought of getting back as soon as possible to the prosperity of normal business. To this end, they sacrificed political independence, shuffled with the categorical imperatives of religion, abandoned themselves with characteristic English energy to materialism, and bore without one twinge of conscience encroachments on their liberty which were destructive of true manhood. The King became a tyrant because his people wished him to be a tyrant. They asked of him only one liberty—the liberty to develop their trade and farm their land. For the rest, they placed complete trust in the wisdom of their prince, regarded Parliament with contempt, and concerned themselves with religion only to pray that quarrels in the Church would not bring a fresh confusion to their profitable commerce. They looked for the finger-prints of progress in the ledgers of the custom-house.

Henry's long contention with Rome was dictated in the first instance solely by patriotism. Born of a family which bred with difficulty, and which had ever been afflicted by a terrifying mortality among the few infants it managed to produce, this son of a usurper, this descendant of a Welsh clerk of the wardrobe, himself a second son who had outlived his elder brother, desired for the sake of England to make his succession safe. Catharine of Aragon gave him no son. Long years after his attempt to nullify that unfortunate boyish marriage, on

the ground that as she was the widow of his brother therefore he ought not to have been allowed to marry her, he proposed to marry Anne Boleyn only because she had conceived a child by him—the illegitimate Elizabeth who was destined to crown with glory the work which her father had begun for England. Throughout the eventful life of this great person a just-minded student of history finds a passion for England which illumines all his acts and at least redeems even the worst of his faults from inexcusable iniquity. Surrounded by princes who endeavoured to trick and outwit him, threatened by emperors and popes with destruction and excommunication, menaced in his own kingdom by civil war and a religious schism fatal to peace, this scholar-monarch, this musician and athletic sportsman, this theologian and wise far-seeing statesman, took the reins of government into his own hands, and with the consent of England became England's tyrant, saving her from the risk and ignominy of Italian dictation, making her name feared and respected throughout all the courts of Europe, laying the foundations of a strength, a prosperity, and a glory which have continued to this day, but bringing upon his country a confusion in religious things which has not even now worked itself out, and begetting a spirit of materialism which has not perished even in the ruins of the Great War.

One instance must suffice of the moral character of the princes with whom he found himself entangled on

the continent of Europe. Ferdinand, the father of his wife, used Catharine in his attempts to hoodwink and trick the King of England. Someone told this Catholic King that a rival charged him with having twice cheated him. "He lies! I cheated him three times," was the retort of Ferdinand. To understand both the masterful nationalism and the moral decay of Henry, one must acquaint himself with the political character of Europe at the time of the revival of learning. It was a den of thieves.

Nothing in Henry is of more significance to the student of human nature than the extraordinary degree to which he carried his capacity to deceive himself. Here was a man who heard masses three or four times a day, who crept to the Cross on Good Friday, who earned from the Pope by a theological treatise the proud title of Defender of the Faith, who called Luther "the serpent," who listened with admiration to the noble sermons of Colet and the noble conversation of More, who was the last person in the world to be stigmatised as a hypocrite: and yet this pious King lived the greater part of his life in the most wanton defiance of the Faith he was so proud to defend, and in complete ignorance of the fact that he was himself a very travesty of the religion he championed.

He was vain. He was proud. He was uncharitable. He was selfish. He was merciless. In the end, he was cruel. Melanchthon likened him, this Defender of the

Faith, this follower of Jesus of Galilee, even to Nero, a comparison which is unjust, for to the end of his days King Henry remained a man; but it is a comparison which prevents us from overlooking the depths to which his spirit fell. Yet he never knew it. To the last he believed himself to be the foremost champion of Jesus, and with the scaffold running blood in his kingdom passed out of human life wringing Cranmer's hand in token that he trusted in Christ.

This amazing instance of self-deception helps one to understand the difficulties which attended the new birth of Europe into the present period of civilisation. Henry's piety was nothing more than pagan superstition in a Christian dress. Of the elements of the teaching of Jesus he was not less ignorant than the Red Indians of America. He never had obtained a glimpse of his own heart. He never had an instant's comprehension of the chaos of his mind. Half-an-hour with Socrates might have made him an honest man—a Christian or an atheist; as it was, following a path which led to the antipodes of the world in which Jesus lived, he called himself a Christian and never knew that this profession was absurd.

If England recovered her political liberties, and if she became a force of enormous moral power in the evolution of civilised Europe, it was because, unknown to the King, there was a spiritual discontent among the most enlightened of his people which could not be satis-

fied either by freedom from the interfering tyranny of Rome or by the increasing prosperity of England's materialism. Of this spirit the King knew little: what he did know of it inspired him to stamp it out. And in the political confusion of Europe this spiritual movement was so insignificant a force that it has been overlooked by many historians of the Renaissance.

Erasmus, who is said to have laid the egg which Luther hatched, had a truer notion than Henry of the forces then at work in human life; but even he did not perfectly realise that the cry of man's spirit which had to be answered in those critical years was one born of hunger and thirst for spiritual reality. He believed that a reform in the manners and morals of monks, bishops, and clergy would pacify political unrest, and he looked to education to effect gradually and peacefully those reforms in Christian theology which were so palpably essential to intellectual honesty in the eyes of scholars.

Few men of that time are nearer to us than this little, delicate, and witty author from "Beer and Butterland," as he himself called his country of Holland. We responded at once to his good humour, we admire with relish his caustic irony and his piercing satire, we perfectly agree with him that fanatics are troublesome people, and like him, we are all convinced that intellect is a force in evolution which may be trusted

to achieve, without political violence and without economic disturbance, a more rational world order.

But a study of his works constrains an honest mind to the conclusion that with all his quickness of observation, with all his penetrating good sense, and with all his contempt for clerical superstition, he himself never once experienced that passionate aspiration after spiritual perfection which was in truth the hidden leaven of the Renaissance. A certain coarseness mars his work, even a touch of salaciousness, and the more one studies him the more one is conscious of a great gulf fixed between his vivacious spirit and the austere souls of men like Wycliffe, Milton, and Wesley—Wycliffe who was the Morning Star of the Reformation, Milton who was the trumpet-voice of its moral victory, and Wesley who was almost the discoverer of its true spiritual purpose.

But if Erasmus lacked the moral purity and the spiritual power of these Englishmen, if he was lacking in majesty of mind, and possessed none of those heroic qualities which endear the greatest of men to a grateful posterity, nevertheless he contributed to the progress of the world an impulse of inexpressible value. In him learning was seen as a passion. He brought to the laborious life of the scholar, not only great talents, but a rejoicing love. From him men caught a new enthusiasm for the freshly discovered works of antiquity and a new faith in the power of the human mind to read the riddle of existence. He was the living soul of Europe's

humanism, the inspiration of a culture destined to revolutionise the world, and he is near to us, and dear to us, because with all his vast learning he never became either a pedant or a dilettante. One may say that his curious and delightful spirit can be seen in all the most lovable of English essayists from Roger Ascham to Charles Lamb.

The story of his life is sooner told than the story of his influence. Born in Rotterdam on the 28th October, 1467, possibly out of wedlock, he was orphaned of both parents just after entering his teens, and fell into the hands of a guardian who first robbed him of his inheritance and then smuggled him into a monastery. At the age of twenty-three, awaking to the moral corruption of his life, and hungering after the knowledge which was denied him, he ended his probationship as an Augustinian monk, became secretary to a bishop, and afterwards was ordained a priest. From this time onward his life was one of many journeys and continual authorship. His first works brought him such fame that kings implored him to come to their courts, and universities begged the honour of numbering him among their teachers. He travelled widely, made friends everywhere, was something of a "sponge" in money affairs, but was incorruptible in his intellectual life. He refused many honours which he deemed dangerous to his liberty of mind, and he protested against wars which self-interest might have

induced a less scrupulous man to condone. To the last he remained faithful to the dream of Augustine. When his satires on the Church delighted Luther he was pleased, but when Luther, instigated by these satires, took action against this derided Church he was at first alarmed and afterwards angered. He had satirised celibacy, and now he satirised the haste with which Lutheran monks got married. He had ridiculed all the practices of the Church—indulgences, saint worship, fasts, and superstitious ceremonial: and now he became a champion of a Church which stuck to these matters and was ready to burn those who assailed them. In the end, hated and distrusted on both sides, he died without confession and without absolution on the 12th July, 1536, in his seventieth year, the last words on his lips being the whispered adoration, "Lieber Gott!"

"To Erasmus," says Froude, "religion was a rule of life, a perpetual reminder to mankind of their responsibility to their Maker, a spiritual authority under which individuals could learn their duties to God and to their neighbours. Definitions on mysterious subjects which could not be understood were the growth of intellectual vanity. The hope of his life had been to see the dogmatic system slackened, the articles essential to be believed reduced to the Apostles' Creed, the declaration that God was a reality, and the future judgment a fact and a certainty. On all else he wished to see opinion

free. The name of heresy was a terror, but so long as the Church abstained from deciding there could be no heresy."

When Leo X sought to divert Europe from the turbulence of Luther by a war against the Turks, Erasmus exclaimed, "The poor Turk!" He hated war and loathed hypocrisy:

"I wonder what the Turks will think when they hear about *instances* and *causes formative,* about *quiddities* and *relativities,* and see our own theologians cursing and spitting at each other, the preaching friars crying up their St. Thomas, the Minorites their Doctor Seraphicus, the Nominalists and Realists wrangling about the nature of the Second Person of the Trinity as if Christ was a malignant demon ready to destroy you if you made a mistake about His Nature.

"While our lives and manners remain as depraved as they now are the Turks will see in us but so many rapacious and licentious vermin. How are we to make the Turks believe in Christ till we show that we believe in Him ourselves? *Reduce the Articles of Faith to the fewest and simplest—Quae pertinent ad fidem quam paucissimis articulis absolvantur.* Show them that Christ's yoke is easy, and that we are shepherds and not robbers, and do not mean to oppress them. . . .

"But oh! what an age we live in. When were morals more corrupt?—ritual and ceremony walking hand in

hand with vice, and wretched mortals caring only to fill their purses. Christ cannot be taught even among Christians. The cry is only for pardons, dispensations, and indulgences, and the trade goes on in the name of popes and princes, or even of Christ Himself."

He was for ever seeking to simplify theology, and his best excuse for withstanding Luther was his dread of a Protestant theology as hard, absurd, and intolerant as that of the Roman Church.

"May not a man be a Christian who cannot explain philosophically how the nativity of the Son differs from the procession of the Holy Spirit? . . . The sum of religion is peace, which can only be when definitions are as few as possible, and opinion is left free on many subjects. Our present problems are said to be waiting for the next Œcumenical Council. Better let them wait till the veil is removed and we see God face to face."

He has glimpses of what is necessary to salvation:

"See what the world is coming to—rapine, murder, plague, famine, rebellion; no one trying to mend his own life."

And again:

"All grows wilder and wilder. Men talk of heresy and orthodoxy, of Antichrists and Catholics, but none speaks of Christ. The world is in labour. Good may

come if Christ directs the birth. There is no hope else. Paganism comes to life again; Pharisees fight against the gospel; in such a monstrous tempest we need skilful pilots. Christ has been sleeping so far. I trust the prayers of the faithful will wake Him. He may then command sea and waves, and they will obey Him. The monks have howled. The theologians have made articles of belief. We have had prisons, informations, bulls, and burnings; and what has come of them? Outcries enough; but no crying to Christ. Christ will not wake till we call to Him in sincerity of heart. Then he will arise and bid the sea be still, and there will be a great calm."

Here we may see that Erasmus discerned the true nature of the sickness which had fallen upon mankind —"no one trying to mend his own life"—and had glimpses of the sole remedy for this lamentable condition of the world—"Christ will not wake till we call to Him in sincerity of heart." But we may be pardoned for supposing that he himself had not deeply entered into the secret of Jesus, and could not easily have lifted the burden of a fellow-man who came to him in any deep distress of soul, although to liken him, as M. Jusserand has done, to Voltaire is surely an exaggeration which takes away the breath.

We may doubt whether Erasmus fully realised that the greatness of his work lay altogether outside his

painful efforts to save theology from self-destruction. To us, looking back to that stormy dawn of a new epoch in human life, it is manifest that he was helping to determine the character of European civilisation chiefly by his instructed enthusiasm for the culture of Greece and Rome.

Life had discovered that it was travelling in the direction of a cul-de-sac. By a violent effort it attempted to throw off the impulse which was driving it to that form of suicide. In the reaction which followed there was a confusion of mind which threatened moral death. Men who had ceased to believe in God pretended that they believed in the gods. There was an intellectual affectation all over Europe, even in England, which was as fatal to progress as it was to honesty. Many Englishmen became Frenchified, and would even tie their shoestrings in French fashion. The English language, which Wycliffe had made so splendid a power, had to be championed by Sir John Cheke, professor of Greek at Cambridge. Everywhere there was a disposition towards dilettantism. Thanks to Erasmus, and thanks to More and Colet whom he inspired, the humanists of England resisted this false impulse and stubbornly sought in knowledge for moral and intellectual power.

Once more the spirit of Socrates and the spirit of Plato came to the rescue of a Church which had ceased to be Christian and was fast falling back into the superstitious futilities and the moral obliquities of pagan

creeds. Once more humanity made up its mind to throw off the shameful spells of necromancy. A fresh start was to be made by the human mind, after more than a thousand years of vain effort to materialise the dream of St. Augustine.

On the 6th May, 1527, nine years before the death of Erasmus, Christian soldiers from Italy, Spain, and Germany poured into the Holy City of Rome, and there committed outrages against virtue and religion which would have disgusted the Arian warriors of Alaric in the fifth century. "The Pope," says Mr. A. F. Pollard in his monograph on Henry VIII, "again fled to the castle of St. Angelo; and for weeks Rome endured an orgy of sacrilege, blasphemy, robbery, murder, and lust, the horrors of which no brush could depict nor tongue recite."

"All the churches and the monasteries," says a cardinal who was present, "both of friars and nuns, were sacked. Many friars were beheaded, even priests at the altar; many old nuns were beaten with sticks; many young ones were violated, robbed, and made prisoners; all the vestments, chalices, silver, were taken from the churches. . . . Cardinals, bishops, friars, priests, old nuns, infants, pages and servants—the very poorest—were tormented with unheard-of cruelties—the son in the presence of his father, the babe in the sight of its mother. All the registers and documents of the Camera Apostolica were sacked, torn in pieces, and partly burnt."

"Having entered," writes an imperialist to Charles, "our men sacked the whole Borgo and killed almost everyone they found. . . . All the monasteries were rifled, and the ladies who had taken refuge in them carried off. Every person was compelled by torture to pay a ransom . . . the ornaments of all the churches were pillaged and the relics and other things thrown into the sinks and cess-pools. Even the holy places were sacked. The Church of St. Peter and the papal palace, from the basement to the top, were turned into stables for horses. . . ."

Thus vanished for many centuries the hope of Augustine. Europe, broken up into warring nations, and committed to the unsatisfying lusts of materialism and with two rival Churches contending for her soul by fighting each other with weapons from the armoury of conspiracy and assassination, set about the perilous work of political reconstruction and moral progress with only the new learning to save her from a catastrophic reversion to barbarism.

It is important to recall the darkness and distraction of the sixteenth century, and to remind ourselves that the Renaissance broke over Europe like a storm, that it did not arise, like the sun of righteousness with healing in its wings, that it was a time of infinite foreboding and the most direful distresses, and that if superstition

perished in the universal contempt of mankind for a Church which had become a blasphemy, nevertheless materialism was born again in the revival of learning.

We are too apt to think of the Renaissance as a beautiful dawn, a dawn of ecstasy, tender with serenity, gracious with freshness, and exulting with hope, a rosy-fingered dawn opening to the ravished eyes of mankind the gates of a new and most enchanting Paradise. We think of Caxton translating into "our maternal English tongue" works of Cicero, Ovid, and Virgil; we think of the four printing-presses in England, Westminster, London,[1] Oxford, and St. Albans, where the new "ars scribendi artificialiter" was practised to the astonishment of all men; we think of Wolsey's great palace of Hampton Court, of his school at Ipswich, of his college at Oxford; we think of Columbus discovering islands "of great beauty and of a thousand shapes, easy of access, covered with trees of a thousand kinds, so high that they seemed to reach into the sky"; we think of the two Cabots and Magellan, of Leonardo da Vinci and Michael Angelo, of Copernicus and Roger Ascham, of Sir Thomas Elyot and Leland, of Sir Walter Raleigh and Drake, of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, of Bacon and Montaigne.

We forget the plague, which first came to England in the dawn of the Renaissance. We forget the constant "robberies, rapes, massacres, and conflagrations."

[1] The printing-press in London, St. Paul's, was sometimes called Eastminster to distinguish it from Westminster.

We forget the 72,000 persons executed during the reign of Henry VIII. We forget the sheep which ate men—the arable land turned down to pasture, the depopulation of villages, the ruin of the English peasantry. We forget the poverty of the people; many scholars at Cambridge "dined on pottage made of a farthing's worth of beef with a little salt and oatmeal, and literally nothing else": the working-classes never ate wheaten bread, and in times of dearth made their bread either of "beanes, peason, or otes, or of altogether, and some acornes among." We also forget the general degradation of English manhood, its servility to the King, its base contentment with the occupations of commerce, its low standard of morals, its obsequious attitude to wealth, its loss of all sense of honour. In a word, we forget that the apostles of the new learning were but a little handful of mankind in a kingdom of the grossest ignorance and the most miserable immorality.

That Erasmus missed the true meaning of the world's unrest does not diminish the greatness of his achievement. More than any man of his time he steadied the passions of Europe and directed the steps of humanity into a way which led, if not to spiritual illumination, at least away from the dullness of materialism. He was a light in the darkness, and a calming voice in the midst of the storm. His sharp wit and his generous good humour were tranquillising forces, and his great learning worked

all the more effectually for the salvation of the world because it was never out of the keeping of his rich humanity.

He brought no peace to the Church, but he brought a more profitable controversy into the life of the world, and set the mind of mankind speculating in a region less barren of harvest than the charred and blackened field of theology. From his influence came to Europe the peaceful duel between idealism and materialism. Because of him intellect has roused itself to confront the greatest of all philosophical questions. And largely because of his charming wit, his humaneness, and his noble liberalism, the long contention between those who follow Plato and those who follow Aristotle has never been disgraced by the intemperance which still outlaws theology from the attention of average men.

"May Christ's dove come among us, or else Minerva's owl," he wrote to the Duke of Saxony in 1524.

The dove was not destined to appear, but the owl had already beaten its soft wings through the darkness of that troubled night. Happily for England there existed at that time men whose enthusiasm for learning, and whose almost ecstatic joy in the discovery of Greek culture, came second to their profound realisation of man as a creature carrying the fortunes of God on this planet. Such a man was Sir Thomas More, "the man of every hour," as Erasmus called him, who was

a Christian socialist, a prison reformer, an opponent of blood sports, and a bold champion of the poor against the despoiling hand of the powerful and the rich. He was so far in advance of his time that he would have permitted suicide to those hopelessly suffering, a divorce to those hopelessly married. Brave enough to jest on the scaffold, he was a man who shrank from pain and abhorred cruelty. "How can nature," he asks those who believe in mortifications, "which orders you to be kind and good to others, command you to be harsh and cruel to yourself? Nature herself enjoins on us to lead a happy life." He had all the Greek feeling for beauty and tenderness, all the Roman regard for courage and moral dignity, but not quite all the sweetness, graciousness, and compassion of the Christian.

Like to him in many ways was Colet, Dean of St. Paul's. Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say that we may now see in Colet more even than in the illustrious Erasmus the true workings of evolution at the time of the Renaissance. The story should be well known how he preached against a war with France and how the Bishop of London strove to undo him in the King's favour, and how Henry sent for him to preach before the Court and how Colet "went boldly at the dangerous subject."

"He preached," says Froude, "on the victory of Christ, spoke of fighting as a savage business, intimated that it was not charity to plunge a sword into another

man's bowels—that it would be better to imitate Christ than to imitate popes like Alexander or Julius."

The King afterwards took him for a walk in the garden and for an hour and a half the two men were together, his enemies thinking that now surely the Dean was undone. But at the end of that conversation the King sent for a cup of wine, embraced Colet, and pledging him with the wine, called out to the courtiers who were gathered there, "Let every man choose his own Doctor. Dean Colet shall be mine."

Erasmus, who helped Colet to establish St. Paul's School, has acknowledged the greatness of his moral character. He saw in him the characteristic good Englishman, the scholar who was not a pedagogue, the gentleman who was not a boor, and the Christian who was neither a fanatic nor a hypocrite. He has given us a sketch of Colet which will live when many of his controversial writings are forgotten, and in that sketch, if it be carefully read, one may see how it was that the Renaissance in England kept a firm hold of moral principles in the heady hour of freedom from a tyrannical clericalism.

I will quote a few passages from this sketch of Dean Colet as it appears in Froude's *Life and Letters of Erasmus:*

"He was a man of genuine piety. He was not born with it. He was naturally hot, impetuous, and resent-

ful—indolent, fond of pleasure and of women's society —disposed to make a joke of everything. He told me that he had fought against his faults with study, fasting, and prayer, and thus his whole life was, in fact, unpolluted with the world's defilements. His money he gave to all pious uses, worked incessantly, talked always on serious subjects to conquer his disposition to levity, not but what you could see traces of the old Adam when wit was flying at feast or festival. He avoided large parties for this reason. He dined on a single dish, with a draught or two of light ale. He liked good wine, but abstained on principle. I never knew a man of sunnier nature. No one ever more enjoyed cultivated society; but here, too, he denied himself, and was always thinking of the life to come. . . .

"He had a bad opinion of the monasteries falsely so-called. He gave them little and left them nothing. He said that morality was always purer among married laymen, and yet, though himself absolutely chaste, he was not very hard on priests and monks who only sinned with women. He did not make light of impurity, but he thought it less criminal than spite and malice and envy and vanity and ignorance. The loose sort were at least made human and modest by their very faults, and he regarded avarice and arrogance as blacker sins in a priest than a hundred concubines.

"He had a particular dislike of bishops. He said they were more like wolves than shepherds. They sold the sacraments, sold their ceremonies and absolutions. They were slaves of vanity and avarice. He did not much blame those who doubted whether a wicked priest could convey sacramental grace, and was indignant that there

were so many of them as to force the question to be raised.

"He disapproved of the great educational institutions in England. He thought they encouraged idleness. As little did he like the public schools. Education was spoilt, he said, when the lessons learnt were turned to worldly account and made the means of getting on. He was himself learned, but he had no respect for a mass of information gathered out of a multitude of books. Such laborious wisdom, he said, was fatal to sound knowledge and right feeling. He approved of a fine ritual at church, but he saw no reason why priests should be always muttering prayers at home or on their walks. He admitted privately that many things were generally taught which he did not believe, but he would not create scandal by blurting out his objections. No book could be so heretical but he would read it, and read it carefully. He learnt more from such books than he learnt from dogmatism and interested orthodoxy."

It was because England numbered among the King's subjects men of this stature, men in whom we may discern the continuity of Wycliffe and the foreshadowing of Milton, that England's Renaissance did not end with the Italianate Englishman of Elizabethan times, but came ultimately to be a palingenesis of the moral conscience.

Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell, Howard and Seymour, Leland and Linacre, Skelton and Wyatt, these and many other illustrious persons, still keep their unfading

places in the rich tapestry of the English Renaissance; but the living spirit of Colet and the living spirit of More are even now in the midst of the English-speaking nations of the world, still wrestling with us for a fulfilment of their aims, still rebuking us when, forgetful of the long and suffering evolution of mankind, we surrender either to the selfish vulgarities of materialism or to the bewitchments of a learning which strikes no roots into the heroic past and stretches no branches into the fulfilling future.

These men are not historic figures to which we look back with interest or amusement. They are our contemporaries. They walk with us to the future, not abreast of us, but ahead of us. Evolution accounts for them as the effort of life to throw forward to its consummation. Religion explains them as men sent from heaven—men so spiritually endowed as to be able to respond to those inspirations of the Infinite which the good in all ages have believed are the providence of God.

Wonderful is the vitality of goodness. In some respects the sixteenth century in England was as full of brutality and terrorism as the seventeenth century in France. In some respects it was more hopeless than any period in man's history since the fall of Rome in the fifth century. And yet because a few men in that age kept faith with virtue, the English Renaissance gave birth to a civilisation which has worked on the whole for the freedom and happiness of the human mind. The

realism of Socrates, the courage of Aristotle, and the beauty of Jesus revived in those few men, and began once more their work on the heart of pilgrim man—"a creature," says Grotius, "most dear to God."

CHAPTER VI

THE AGE OF CROMWELL

(1599–1658)

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That a man may think what he chooses to think appears to us as the first clause in the charter of liberty. That he could, indeed, think anything else seems to us a very great absurdity on the part of those who suppose it.

What Bayle calls "a ludicrous turn by a masterly hand" is given to the idea of submitting the reason to authority by St. Evremond in his *Conversation between Maréchal Hocquincourt and Father Canaye.* It is worth quoting:

"'The devil take me if I believed a syllable then,' said the Maréchal Hocquincourt; 'but ever since I could endure to be crucified for religion. Not that I see more reason in it now; but, on the contrary, less than ever: but for all that I could suffer myself to be crucified, without knowing why, or wherefore.'

"'So much the better, my lord,' replied the Father, twanging it devoutly through the nose, 'so much the better; these are not human motions; they proceed from

God. No reason! That is the true religion: No reason. What an extraordinary grace, my lord, has heaven bestowed upon you! *Estote sicut infantes,* be ye as children: children have still their innocence, and why? Because they have no reason. *Beati pauperes spiritu,* Blessed are the poor in spirit; they sin not; the reason is because they have no reason. No reason: without knowing why or wherefore: Oh excellent words! They ought to be written in golden letters. *Not that I see more reason in it now; but, on the contrary, less than ever.* In truth this is divine for them that have any taste of heavenly things: No reason. What an extraordinary grace, my lord, has God bestowed upon you!' "

But not only to Henry the Eighth, Queen Elizabeth, and Charles the First did any doctrine of free thought seem manifestly subversive of all order; it was also objectionable to the minds of Sir Thomas More, Luther, Calvin, and the leading Presbyterians of the seventeenth century. If the Papists burned John Huss, the Reformers burned Servetus. No page in the biography of Sir Thomas More leaves so sad a memory as that which records his approval of executing heretics. No stain on the Reformation is so deep as that left by the cruelty of its heroic protagonists towards those who dared to withstand the despotism with which that Reformation attempted to supplant the despotism of Rome.

The history of our own days should prevent us, however, from too hasty a condemnation of those who in times past regarded private judgment either with grave

OLIVER CROMWELL

From a painting, by an unknown artist, in the National Portrait Gallery

suspicion or a fanatical enmity. The bolshevist in Russia, the gunman in Ireland, the communist in Italy, the non-co-operator in India, the plotting monarchist in Germany, the Red advocate of Direct Action in England, suggest to us that many even now may not be fit to enjoy the dangerous blessing of free thought.

Perhaps there is no more helpful way of understanding the difficult and confusing history of the seventeenth century than by thinking of it in terms of M. Bergson's picturesque philosophy. To do this fruitfully one must first summarise to oneself the history of evolution. One must think of Life pushing obstinate matter into a thousand blind alleys, reaching enormous strength, incredible swiftness, marvellous cunning, beautiful co-operation, but finding only in the creature Man an open door for the hidden purposes of creation. One must discern in this strange creature qualities which entirely differentiate him from all other creations of evolution—the three faculties of speech, music, and mathematics; and one must watch him slowly and fearfully forsaking the path of instinct for the yet untrodden ways of reason, developing within himself the power of reflection and the rudiments of a conscience.

One must see the family extending into the tribe, and the tribe into the nation, a rude morality, a rough justice, a dim religion, a crude science shaping everything. One must see intelligence, organisation, and idealism gradually

constructing empires of great glory, great power, and great promise, but empires built upon the slavery of multitudes and existing only for the gratification of the few. One must see these empires falling into decay and ruin, discarded by Life on its journey of creation, just as it discarded the mastodon and the sabre-toothed tiger. One must see this invisible spirit of Life, at a grave crisis in its progress, thrusting the Israelitish slaves of Egypt into the wilderness, there to worship a moral God, and one must see these former slaves, inspired by this theory of a Power in the universe that made for righteousness, building up a civilisation of their own in Palestine, founded upon a moral idea infinitely superior to the childish superstitions of Egypt, but a civilisation, all the same, penetrated by the deadly corruption of materialism.

One must see in Greece the ascent of Life to a more comprehensive philosophy, which apprehended a sublime Truth and an incorruptible Justice behind the stage-play of Olympian deities. One must listen to Socrates talking of the God without and the God within, of laws which cannot be broken, of a power which cannot be deceived, almost as Moses and the first Isaiah had spoken. One must see Archimedes, Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Ptolemy examining nature, as a curious problem the solution of which would contribute to human power—Life seeking to develop reason in the field of the senses, grappling with its environment in a new way, apart from tradition and priestcraft. And one must see a bolder and

a more moral people conquering these brilliant but quarrelsome and immoral Greeks, who could not rise to the height of the Socratic simplicity; and one must watch this great Roman people overrunning the world, absorbing much that was fine and true and elevating in Greek culture, but finally sinking, under an immense burden of prosperity, into a moral vileness greater than ever existed in Athens and into a contemptible superstition more destructive even than that of Egypt in the days of the Pharaohs.

Life is again approaching a blank wall. Animalism is again dragging reason and soul back to the paralysis of the instincts. But suddenly, in an unexpected place, the open door is found for Life's advance. A little party of men in Galilee, descendants of the Egyptian slaves who had fled from their masters under a moral compulsion, speak once more of a Justice which cannot be bribed, of a Truth which cannot be hoodwinked, of a Responsibility which cannot be shirked, and of a Beauty which ought to be desired; speak of Spirit as the one abiding reality, and of materialism as the enemy of truth.

Finally, one must see this last heroic and marvellously triumphant attempt of Life to find the open door ultimately frustrated by its immemorial enemy. The moral glory of the Christian empire, a far more exceeding glory than that of Egypt or Babylon, Greece or Rome, is overtaken by materialism: the saint gives place to the dishonest priest, the devout missionary becomes the ecclesi-

astical statesman, the scholar monk becomes the sceptical dilettante pope: once more superstition invades the human mind, once more European progress is flung back to the idolatries of Asia, once more Life finds itself in a blind alley. Materialism has conquered.

A time of fresh convulsion for mankind is now manifestly at hand. If we forget the men of the Reformation, their names and stations, and think of Life wildly seeking an escape from its blind alley, attempting with frenzy to break away from the materialism which is dragging it back to the bounded prison of animal instincts, we shall better understand what was to come. All the creative work of the innumerable years of evolution was in peril. Life must find a fresh outlet, or it must rush backward to its beginnings. Here it moved resolutely to an iron despotism; there it swung towards an untrammelled liberty; and elsewhere it sought tentatively a thousand compromises, a thousand pretexts for makeshifts and patchwork, afraid to lose in fresh experiments which might lead to unreckoned disasters, what it had already so painfully, so heroically achieved.

The whole world was in commotion. When the first convulsion was passed Life found itself on a road hitherto untrodden—the road of liberty. Alarm overtook it before it had advanced to the first mile-post on that new road. Even those who had been foremost in throwing off the old tyrannies or despotisms, recoiled

from the advance. Who could trust humanity to think for itself?

Who could name a final authority in things temporal? The mind of Europe was arrested. The soul of man came to a standstill. Only a chosen few realised that "there is no epic of the certainties," that only on the open road of faith and experiment can adventure be met worthy to shape the soul of man.

In the early years of the seventeenth century Life was marking time, uncertain what it should do. So far as England was concerned it seemed as if the violence of convulsion had exhausted her, and that she no longer had any signal part to play in the great drama of creative evolution.

The huge figure of Henry the Eighth had departed from the scene. The hot and imperious spirit of Elizabeth no longer flamed like a battle-flag before the advancing fortunes of the British race. On the throne of these British Islands, which Milton was content to take for his world, sat an elegant, incompetent, and impecunious Scotsman, Charles the First, obsessed by the idea that he must conquer the Palatinate for his nephew. On the surrounding seas lay the fever-ridden wreckage of that gallant and unconquerable English Fleet which, in spite of the penurious Elizabeth, Sir Francis Drake had made a supreme weapon in the hand of evolution. And in the dust of Europe, a thing of contempt and derision

to Richelieu, lay the great name of England, great no longer.

Van Dyck is responsible for much bad history. Charles the First looks into the eyes of mankind with so beautiful an innocence and so charming an air of refinement that many find it difficult to think of that "comely head" containing thoughts which were fatal to the progress of the human race. They remind themselves that Cromwell was disfigured by warts and wore red flannel round his throat when he went to church. They tell themselves that nothing of Cromwell's statesmanship remains, and little of his religious reformation. They feel that they are nearer to the elegant and gracious Charles, who at least knew a good picture from a bad one, and who was neither Papist nor Puritan but a compromising Arminian, or as we should say now a good Anglo-Catholic—nearer to this handsome and sympathetic King than to his psalm-singing conqueror, who had some connection with a brewery, was Welsh by descent, like the Tudors, and whose real name was Williams.

But Van Dyck's flattering portraits of King Charles at least save us from intemperate condemnation and illiberal judgments. The King was not consciously the villain of the piece. Great as were his mistakes, ludicrous as were his pretensions, and inevitable as was his removal from the path of English life, he was not of set purpose opposing himself either to the Will of God or to the prosperity of his subjects. He was Life with its head over

its shoulder. He was evolution in a mould which creation had made to be broken. He was an authority which had ceased to be authentic. He implicitely believed that he was the head of the Church. He could not conceive of anybody else telling people what they were to believe and how they were to act. As for the will of his subjects, the nation gave him proof when swords were drawn that he had read its wish aright. Three-quarters of the Kingdom were on his side.

It is a curious truth that the English nation was not restive when the King placed his finger on its conscience. Revolution came because he could not keep his hands out of its pockets. Bossuet charged our ancestors under the Tudors and the Stuarts with the humiliating weakness of submissiveness, and it is difficult to repel the accusation, which is so contrary to our national legends. Submissiveness under the Tudors might pass for loyalty. Those passionate sovereigns prospered the nation and almost brought a Golden Age to our English earth. But Charles the First reduced the country not only to a condition of impotence, but to a state of derision. He was outwitted by the Spaniards, beaten by the French, and ridiculed by the Dutch. And the country was still submissive. One asks oneself whether submission is the right word. Under the Tudors that word might pass; but under Charles Stuart is not servility the juster term?

To account for such a state of mind in our ancestors

one looks for a cause more powerful than the right hand of an incompetent and disastrous King. One finds the fault in themselves. "The fault is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings." Materialism, the oldest and the most victorious enemy of evolution, had put chains of servitude on the English people. They cared for nothing but the rewards of commerce. So given up were they to material prosperity that they were known as the cheats and rogues of Europe. A document dated 1585 tells of the shoddy manufactured in England: "Many good laws have been made about it, but there is no execution of them, for it is most manifest, and I am right sorry to say it, but it is true, that there is more false cloth and woollen made in this realm than in all Europe besides." Laws were passed attempting to check the two evils of false weights and adulterations which were corrupting the whole national life and contributing to the ill fame of England on the Continent. Agriculture, the very bedrock of the national greatness, was also in evil case. The small-holder had been dispossessed; the peasants were punished for demanding a fair wage, the cottages of the poor were no better than hovels, and the rich were more and more converting arable land into pasture —King Charles plundering on a scale which staggers us. There had been little piety and much frank greed in the breaking up of the monasteries. The Church was robbed by the rich, the poor were enslaved by the rich, and the State was composed of the plunderers—composed, that

is, of the Sovereign, the new nobility which had arisen from the ashes of the Wars of the Roses, the merchants from which that new nobility was recruited, and the tradespeople who battened on this rich prosperity of a commercial age.

It is of the first importance, if one wishes to understand the work of the Puritans, to realise that materialism was the ruling spirit of England in the seventeenth century, and that this spirit of materialism had reduced the great bulk of the nation to a condition of the most humiliating servility.

"Let me speak a paradox but a truth," said Thomas Adams, preaching at St. Paul's in the year 1612; "it is the plague of many that they are not plagued: even this is their punishment, the want of punishment: and the hand of God is then heaviest, when it is lightest: heaviest on the conscience, when lightest on the carcase."

For seventeen years the English people submitted to the absolutism of a King who could never start a venture without meeting disaster and never open his mouth without uttering an absurdity. He could address a Parliament in which sat men like Hampden, Pym, Selden, Coke, and Eliot, with words of this nature: "Remember that Parliaments are altogether in my power for their calling, sitting, and dissolution; therefore, as I find the fruits of them good or evil, they are to continue or not to be." When he was refused supplies he told the House of Commons that he had other means of getting money, adding

with an insolence which would have astonished Elizabeth, "Take not this as a threat, for I scorn to threaten any but my equals." When Parliament declared its right to control the militia, certainly an innovation, he made answer, "By God, not for an hour!" He was convinced that he was essential to the existence of the realm. "You cannot be without me," was one of his phrases; another, "You will fall to ruin if I do not sustain you"; and another, uttered with almost his last breath, "A subject and a sovereign are clean different things."

Nothing so sharply reveals to us the grotesque arrogance of his mind as the royal declaration of 1629 ordering theology to put up its shutters. He believed that he could stop evolution by an edict, thus saving Dame Partington from becoming the most ludicrous figure of history. There was to be no more searching for divine truth, no more speculation in the dark region of religion. The King had spoken; let theology stand still, and his subjects hold their peace.

His capacity to interpret the good news of Christianity may be judged by the ferocity and the meanness which characterised his punishments of those who could not take their conscience from the King. For publishing a tract against prelacy Leighton was sentenced "to pay a fine of £10,000, to be pilloried at Westminster, and then to be whipped and have an ear cut off, and at some future time to undergo the like punishment at Cheapside, after which he was to be imprisoned for life." For his attack

on the disgusting lewdness of the stage, which contained, we must admit, a gross attack on the Queen, the barrister William Prynne was sentenced "to be imprisoned for life, to pay a fine of £5,000, to be expelled from Lincoln's Inn, and to be disbarred, to be deprived of his academic Degree, to be set in the pillory, and to have both his ears cut off." Henry Burton, a clergyman, and John Bastwick, a physician, for pamphlets against prelacy and idolatrous ceremonies, were fined £5,000 each, put in the pillory, had their ears cut off, and were sentenced to imprisonment for life. John Lilburne, twenty years of age, for publishing Puritan books in Holland and refusing to answer the interrogatories of the Star Chamber, was "flogged and pilloried, and then placed in most rigorous durance in the Fleet prison, where he would have died of hunger had not his fellow prisoners given him of their scanty food."

These cases, and many others, are mentioned by Mr. F. C. Montague in the seventh volume of *The Political History of England,* a contribution to the English narrative of the seventeenth century which has no rival in our libraries for accuracy, impartiality, and patient psychological penetration. Lord Morley, in his volume on Oliver Cromwell, speaks with indignation of the split noses and the slashed cheeks of all those who had the courage to resist Charles's Spanish absolutism. He has small sympathy for the narrowness of the Puritans and nothing save condemnation for their intolerance; but for

him Charles is a mean creature of duplicity, ungenial and disobliging, without indwelling moral dignity, the royal egotist without the mark. "Of gratitude for services, of sympathy, of courage in friendship, he never showed a spark." He cites Charles's treatment of Sir John Eliot:

"The rigours of his prison-house in the Tower could not break that dauntless spirit, but they killed him. The King knew well what he was doing, and even carried his vindictiveness beyond death. Eliot's young son petitioned the King that he might carry the remains to Cornwall to lie with those of his ancestors. Charles wrote on the petition 'Let Sir John Eliot's body be buried in the parish of that church where he died'; and his ashes lay unmarked in the chapel of the Tower."

It was with a King of this character that Puritan England bore for seventeen years of cruelty, of foreign adventures which ended in disaster, of an ever-increasing influence of the Jesuits, and of arbitrary power. A merchant of London declared that in no part of the world were merchants "so screwed and wrung as in England; in Turkey they have more encouragement." Yet the Church supported him, the Judiciary registered his decisions with servility, and Parliament was humility itself in venturing to assert at least the theoretical existence of its ancient liberties. A controversy arose between *Rex* and *Lex,* out of which was to emerge the England of modern history. Finch, a former speaker of the House

of Commons, declared that no Act of Parliament makes any difference to the King's prerogative. The King could levy what taxes he chose, could raise what armies he chose, could take away any liberties, however ancient, which in his eyes hindered good government. Berkeley said bluntly that law was nothing more than the King's servant. When the Chief Baron hesitated to decide against members of Parliament imprisoned by Charles's order, Charles suspended him, and judges were found to do the King's will. For eleven years he ruled England without a Parliament.

"The time had come," says Mr. Montague, "when England must be either a country of legal freedom or a country of absolute power. The Stuarts, to use Burke's phrase, had made the medicine of the constitution its daily food. Out of all the arbitrary acts of high-minded rulers, often in times of real stress and peril, they had made a practice of the constitution, and then, going beyond the Tudors, they had based this practice on a clear and rigorous theory of monarchical power which recognised in the law no force but the sovereign's pleasure and gave the subject no title to his liberty but the sovereign's forbearance. Parliament could not but join issue with such Kings."

Life, brought to this fateful impasse, struggled for freedom in two directions. Galileo died in the first year of England's Civil War, and on Christmas Day of that

same year Isaac Newton was born in a Lincolnshire farmhouse. A power greater than politics was at work in the world; into that world a mind had now come destined to exercise an unchallenged supremacy over the human intellect for nearly three hundred years; henceforth neither the priest nor the statesman was to lead the advancing armies of humanity, but the mathematician. It is at least a striking coincidence that the last year of the sixteenth century witnessed the burning at the stake of Giordano Bruno, after six years' imprisonment, and that while Arminian and Puritan were opening the seventeenth century with blood and fire Galileo was at Rome defending the Copernican system against the orthodox Ptolemaic astronomy. Galileo, musician, painter, and poet, was in truth a far more formidable enemy of Rome than Cromwell or Milton. In discovering the Laws of Motion and laying the foundations of Mechanics, and in preparing the way of Isaac Newton, we may say that he was doing even greater service for mankind than the sword of the one or the pen of the other.[1]

But Life, seeking its freedom along the path of science, had at that same moment a more convulsive movement to make on the older road of politics. It may be said without absurdity, seeing what has followed from

[1] One may see the distance covered by mankind since those days when one remembers that the blind Galileo, broken by the death of his favourite daughter, was denied the right, as the prisoner of the Inquisition, either to make a will or to be buried in consecrated ground.

the English revolution, that it was seeking to restore, to re-create, and to re-inspire the manhood of the British Islands. Servility, born of a gross materialism, was destroying that manhood so that it could play no part in the world save as pedlar and carrier. To make it a moral force on this planet, to give it a Washington for America, a Livingstone for Africa, a Lawrence for India, and a Newton, a John Howard, a Darwin, and a Lister for all mankind, it was necessary to break down the blank wall of monarchical despotism, to overthrow the obstacle of an obscurantic clericalism, and to burn up with fire from heaven the base materialism in which the soul of England was perishing.

> Nature, that hateth emptiness,
> Allows of penetration less,
> And therefore must make room
> Where greater spirits come.

While Newton slept in his cradle, the sword of Cromwell did all these things. It was but a small part of his achievement to sweep away the armed forces of royalism —they returned triumphant after his death; it was also a small part of his achievement to overthrow the tyranny of a priesthood—that tyranny too crept back into England after his death; but in burning up the materialism of his age, he burnt up for evermore the humiliating servility of the English people, set English manhood on its feet for all time, and brought into existence the great and

world-inspiring ideal of English democracy. Materialism returned, and will ever return, but since Cromwell's day it has been met by something in English character which at least suspects it and which can no longer be deluded by the snares of its worst slavery. Monarchy returned, but not as an absolute monarchy; clericalism came back, but not with the faggots of the Inquisition. Cromwell had cleared the field for a new idea of freedom, for a new moral dignity of man, and had roused the conscience of England to a new conception of truth which brought with it a new ideal of honesty.

Lord Acton, a devout Catholic, saw clearly enough in the documents of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that religious tolerance was won against the opposition of religious people, both Catholic and Protestant, and his honest mind attributed to the heroism and self-sacrifice which won the English people their civil liberties that inestimable benefit of tolerance which not only allows men to worship God in the fashion they deem best, but permits science to ask whatever questions it chooses of the universe, without fear of the dungeon, the rack, and the stake:

"If in the seventeenth century, which achieved so much for civil liberty, freedom of conscience was not established in England, the fault lay with the oppressed communities as much as with the crown or the dominant church. The Catholic and the Protestant sects were alike

intolerant. The latter deserved what they received, and justified by their theories and their acts the penal laws by which they suffered. They were ready to do to others what was done to them. No religious party in the country admitted the right of minorities to the protection of the law. Religious liberty grew up in England as the fruit of civil liberty, of which it is a part, and in conjunction with which it has yet much way to make. But if the Protestants were not sincere in arguing for toleration, the Catholics were not honest in the means by which they endeavoured to obtain it. They sought as a concession that which was a right; they wished for privilege instead of liberty; and they defended an exception and not a principle. The Catholics of that age had degenerated from the old mediaeval spirit, which stood by the right and respected the law, but did not stoop to power. In the great constitutional struggle they disregarded the impending absolutism and the outraged laws, and gave to the royal cause, when it was most in fault, a support which, by prolonging the contest, drove the parliamentary opposition into lawless extremes, and postponed for half a century the establishment of freedom."—*Historical Essays and Studies,* p. 121.

This just statement of the case, so valuable from its source, should help to correct one of the most common errors concerning Cromwell's place in English history. In Milton and Bunyan, says Lord Morley, rather than in Cromwell, we seek what was deepest, loftiest, and most abiding in Puritanism: "we look to its apostles rather than its soldier." But Cromwell was something much greater

than the soldier of puritanism. He was the soldier of liberty. His terrible sword was not drawn to set up a sectarian democracy, but to win for the English people their civil liberties. Deep as was his own sense of God's personal dealing with the individual soul, sharp as were the marks of Calvin on his heavy but not morbid heart, Cromwell was the greatest enemy of religious intolerance in the seventeenth century only because he was the most powerful warrior of human freedom.

Democracy was born in the camp of Cromwell's army. At the outbreak of the Civil War the soldiers of the Parliament were no better disciplined or inspired than the soldiers of the King. They mutinied, they robbed, they drank themselves into a sottish condition whenever they got free access to alcohol, and they deserted. One of their own generals declared them to be fit only for a gallows here and a hell hereafter. Cromwell's religious zeal, his masterful sense of order, his inspiring leadership of men, and his iron discipline raised up in the New Model "such an army," says Mr. Montague, "as has never been surpassed, perhaps never been equalled, in England." This army stood between the fanatical intolerance of both the Arminians and the Presbyterians. It stood for freedom. It would subscribe to no exclusiveness. It had one purpose and one inspiration, to win for itself and for the whole nation that liberty of conscience which it could obtain neither from the King nor the Parliament. "Many of the doctrines which in the following century shook

Europe and America were first proclaimed by the warriors of the New Model."

To Cromwell more than to any man in history the world owes the idea of political liberty. Others there were, before his day and in his own hour, whose loftier souls cherished this ideal of a free and merciful state; Lilburne the Leveller was perhaps the true apostle, in Cromwell's time, of democracy; but Cromwell, with all his faults and in spite of all his failures, was the first man in the world to take the seed of this idea out of the human mind and plant it in the actual earth of daily life. He was truly a man sent by God, and none the less an authentic messenger of that Providence whose patience fills us with an inarticulate wonderment because, like almost every other inspired man, he did not see to the end of God's purpose. Andrew Marvell was right:

'Tis madness to resist or blame
The face of angry heaven's flame;
And if we would speak true,
Much to the Man is due

Who, from his private gardens, where
He lived reserved and austere
(As if his highest plot
To plant the bergamot)

Could by industrious valour climb
To ruin the great work of time
And cast the Kingdoms old
Into another mould.

But the achievement of Cromwell is now so manifest to all who have studied the documents of his time that one need not insist upon the debt which men owe to his consummate generalship, his noble idealism, and his inspiring effort to grapple with an inspiration. It is in his failure to set up the machinery of democracy on the ancient ground of monarchy that we may best find our way to follow the path of moral and intellectual evolution.

"Thou canst not be free," Milton declared to him, "if we are not; for it is the law of nature that he who takes away the liberty of others is by that act the first himself to lose his own. A mighty task hast thou undertaken; it will probe thee to the core, it will show thee as thou art, thy carriage, thy force, thy weight; whether there be truly alive in thee that piety, fidelity, justice, and moderation of spirit, for which we believe that God hath exalted thee above thy fellows. To guide three mighty states by counsel, to conduct them from institutions of error to a worthier discipline, to extend a provident care to furthest shores, to watch, to foresee, to shrink from no toil, to flee all the empty shows of opulence and power—these indeed are things so arduous that, compared with them, war is but as the play of children."

Cromwell strove to serve humanity in this sublime fashion. It is agreed by all competent men that he tried; no one asserts that ambition urged him towards autocracy. He bade Parliament be "pitiful and tender to all, though of different judgments. Love all," he went on, "tender

all, cherish and countenance all, in all things that are good. And if the poorest Christian, the most mistaken Christian, shall desire to live peaceably and quietly under you—I say, if any shall desire but to lead a life of godliness and honesty, let him be protected." There spoke the very heart of this tempestuous man whose anger flamed up only in the face of intolerance. Cromwell, "our chief of men," was cruel only when he encountered cruelty, and Milton spoke truly, reminding him that "Peace hath her victories no less renowned than War," when he said of the Protector that his life had been "guided by faith and matchless fortitude."

To the Parliament of 1656 the Protector addressed these words: "There is one general grievance in the nation. It is the law. I think, I may say it, I have as eminent judges in this land as have been had, or that the nation has had for these many years. . . . But the truth of it is, there are wicked and abominable laws that will be in your power to alter. To hang a man for sixpence, threepence, I know not what, to hang for a trifle, and pardon murder, is in the ministration of the law through the old framing of it. I have known in my experience abominable murders quitted; and to see men lose their lives for petty matters! This is a thing that God will reckon for; and I wish it may not lie upon this nation a day longer than you have an opportunity to give a remedy; and I hope I shall cheerfully join with you in it."

Those who point an accusing finger to his work in

Ireland forget that among the execrable and blood-thirsty murders of men, women, and children in Piedmont who roused the wrath of Milton, there were many Irish mercenaries, forget, that is to say, that "the wild Irish" of those times had not reached the moral stature even of the Irish of the twentieth century.[1]

Cromwell himself has explained his severity. In his Declaration to the Irish bishops he announced that Ireland had once been united to England, and went on to say: "You broke this Union. You, unprovoked, put the English to the most unheard of and most barbarous massacre (without respect of sex or age) that ever the sun beheld." Catholic writers have probably exaggerated his vengeance, for, severe as it may have been, Cromwell, who was as truthful as he was fearless, challenged the Irish to prove their accusations in these remarkable words, "Give us an instance of one man since my coming into Ireland, not in arms, massacred, destroyed, or banished; concerning the massacre or the destruction of whom justice hath not been done, or endeavoured to be done."

Lord Morley reminds the modern reader why the English of that day regarded the Church of Rome as the enemy of human society:

[1] During the expedition against Cadiz in 1702, "soldiers and sailors plundered Port St. Mary, even robbing the churches, a pastime in which Lord Nugent's Irish 'Rapparees,' as they were called, specially distinguished themselves" (*Political History of England*, vol. ix, p. 13).

". . . the counter-reformation or the catholic reaction, by the time when Cromwell and Charles came into the world, had achieved startling triumphs. The indomitable activity of the Jesuits had converted opinion, and the arm of flesh lent its aid in the holy task of reconquering Christendom. What the arm of flesh meant the English could see with the visual eye. They never forgot Mary Tudor and the Protestant martyrs. In 1567 Alva set up his court of blood in the Netherlands. In 1572 the pious work in France began with the massacre of St. Bartholomew. In 1588 the Armada appeared in the British Channel for the subjugation and conversion of England. In 1605 Guy Fawkes and his powder-barrels were found in the vault under the House of Lords. These were the things that explain that endless angry refrain against popery, that rings through our seventeenth century with a dolorous monotony at which modern indifference may smile and reason and tolerance may groan."

Whether it be the Romish influence or some other cause, it would seem from later history that in the Irish nature there is an element of discord which baffles itself, and a force with which evolution finds it difficult to co-operate.

But if Cromwell strove with all his might to set up a tolerant and benevolent democracy, nevertheless he failed; and his failure, as I have said, is our shortest way to an understanding both of his character and of the England of his day.

Cromwell failed because the manhood of the British

Isles was not yet fitted for self-government. It was still, in an overwhelming majority, on the side of materialism. The men who followed him were scarce a handful of the people; and many among those who called themselves Independents were of that colour in theology only because they wanted peace for their trading. Like so many enthusiasts, Cromwell forgot the pull on spirit of this immemorial obstinacy of matter. He thought that the majority of the nation would welcome a condition of things which made for moral dignity, for freedom of conscience, and for the Kingdom of God. He was wrong. Further, he thought that among all those who desired these things there would be unanimity of mind. And here again he was wrong. "I am more troubled now," he exclaimed in his perplexity, "with the fool than with the knave."

Macaulay very often speaks of the English as though they had always been champions of freedom and warriors of the law. But even he is obliged to confess the servility of the nation under the Tudors and the Stuarts. England, he says, has no such names to show in the history of the Reformation as Luther, Calvin, and Knox. That Reformation, so far as England is concerned, was merely a political scheme "to transfer the full cup of sorceries from the Babylonian enchantress to other hands, spilling as little as possible by the way." Henry the Eighth took the place of the Roman Pontiff. The same mysteries existed: it was only the dispenser who was changed. "He punished with equal severity those who renounced the

doctrines of Rome, and those who acknowledged her jurisdiction." Elizabeth detested the Puritans. James detested them even more than Elizabeth. No atheist could have been so hated by Tudor and Stuart as those simple realists of the Christian religion. Power was in the hands of sovereigns who believed more passionately in uniformity than in the existence of God. The enslavement of the human mind was the first article of their faith. The Church was a buttress to the Throne. And the Throne stood for Authority—that unifying principle without which humanity would fall asunder. As for religion, it was conformity to a ritual. A gallant cavalier hanged for a burglary after the Restoration "told the crowd that his mind received great consolation from one reflection: he had always taken off his hat when he went into a church."

Many of the finest spirits in England left the shores of the British Islands rather than live under the tyranny of such popish sovereigns. America was enriched by this defection, England impoverished. The conquerors of Charles the First were a minority of the nation; those who strewed roses in the way of Charles the Second the vast majority of the British people. It is only when we thoroughly apprehend the condition of the English mind in the seventeenth century that we can appreciate the greatness of Cromwell's achievement and understand the reason of his failure. He established reli-

gious freedom in a divided nation, both sides of which stood for religious tyranny. He failed to set up a free democracy because the nation was too sunk in materialism to care deeply for its political liberties. All that survived of his heroic achievement, destined in after years to bear such amazing fruit, was the work of a minority.

Out of the welter of those dreadful times one clear idea emerged into the full daylight of English life, the noble and the mighty idea that the Law is above the King. It may be said that from Cromwell's day this central belief grew in the English mind until it became the religion of the British people. And, in truth, it is a religious idea. For the Law is of all witnesses to the truth of evolution and the moral idealism of the human race the most living and the most potent. It stands for a proof of man's faith in betterment and progress. It is the hand of conscience writing on the parchment of physical evolution. It is the confession of man that there is in this material world something higher than selfishness, something greater than a struggle for existence, something more authoritative than the caprices of individualism.

Out of this recognition of the supremacy of Law have come all our liberties, civil and religious. We are not merely free to think, but obliged by our faith in truth to think carefully and honestly. We are not merely free to vote who shall rule over us, but obliged by our faith in democracy to vote as men and women into whose hands

are committed the awful responsibility of the higher life of the human race and the material fortunes of civilisation. With us it is not as it is with the people of Asia: the Law is not imposed upon us either by a deity or a potentate: it is not something without us, but within us: it is not something we disobey at our peril, but something that we must uphold at all times and in all places, something to the rescue of which we must go whenever it is in danger, ready to lay down our lives for its safety. It is we ourselves, at our highest and best.

This fundamental greatness of modern England was the work of Cromwell. Forced by the religious intolerance of his day to assume the position of arbitrary ruler, forced to keep order in a divided house by the power of his unconquerable army, nevertheless he so lifted the idea of Law out of the mire of servility that when Charles the Second returned it was on terms which guarded the civil liberties of the realm from any arbitrary act of the royal power. Because of that new manhood in the English people, that new sense of something above them which was worth living for and dying for, something in human life making for moral dignity and intellectual power, because of this, not only was religious controversy brought to its senses, but science was at last set free to do its mighty work on the human soul.

"The whole history of Christianity," says Macaulay, "shows that she is in far greater danger of being cor-

rupted by the alliance of power than of being crushed by its opposition. Those who thrust temporal sovereignty upon her treat her as their prototypes treated her author. They bow the knee, and spit upon her; they cry 'Hail' and smite her on the cheek; they put a sceptre in her hand, but it is a fragile reed; they crown her, but it is with thorns; they cover with purple the wounds which their own hands have inflicted on her; and inscribe magnificent titles over the cross on which they have fixed her to perish in ignominy and pain."

Christianity revived with the rise of science, and henceforth the duel between materialism and idealism was fought out in an atmosphere of liberty. The human mind was set free to think its way to truth, and to explore every avenue which promised a way to reality. Not only was the earth to be searched, and nature's laws to be fearlessly examined, but as fearlessly the documents of religion were to me searched and examined for the truth hidden there in the midst of legend, superstition, and ignorance. The whole round of life was made free to inquiry. Humanity advanced in knowledge, in power, and in wealth, inclining now to materialism and now to idealism, but always cherishing in its mind the idea of a road to be traversed and a goal to be reached. Stagnation died with despotism.

"It is the high distinction of Oliver's Court," says Frederic Harrison, "that for once it exacted morality

and purity from men as much as from women. He long refused his daughter's hand to the heir of the Earl of Warwick, because he was told the young man was given to play and other vices. The state kept by the Protector, though modest and serious, was neither gloomy nor uncouth. Oliver loved music, encouraged music, and held weekly concerts. He loved society; and was frank, humorous, and genial with his intimates; affable with dependants and strangers; stately and impressive on occasions of state. It is remembered to his honour that he preserved to our country the cartoons of Raffaelle, and the 'Triumph' of Mantegna, together with some royal palaces and parks; that he collected a fine library; that he sought out and gathered round him many men of genius and learning.[1] He was generous of his personal fortune, and made no use of power to extend it. He showed no disposition to nepotism; was exceedingly slow to advance his own sons; did nothing to promote the private interest of his own family. About his whole career there was no stain of personal interest."

Cromwell explains the secret of his greatness in the noble address he made to the Parliament of 1656:

"The mind is the man. If that be kept pure, a man signifies somewhat; if not, I would very fain see what

[1] Likewise he protected Oxford and Cambridge against the intolerant zeal and æsthetic ignorance of many hotheads in the England of those stormy days.

difference there is betwixt him and a beast. He hath only some activity to do some more mischief."

At which Carlyle breaks out into justifiable thanksgiving: "A real 'Head of the Church,' this 'King'; not an imaginary one!" And when Cromwell speaks of the Eighty-first Psalm, quoting many of those majestic verses to the House of Commons, Carlyle breaks out again: "What a vision of celestial hope is this! vista into Lands of Light; God's Will done on earth; this poor Earth; this poor English Earth an Emblem of Heaven; where God's Blessing reigns supreme; where ghostly Falsity and brutal Greed and Baseness, and Cruelty and Cowardice and Sin and Fear, and all the Hell-Dogs of Gehenna shall lie chained under our feet; and Man, august in divine manhood, shall step victorious over them, heavenward, like a god! O Oliver, I could weep,— and yet it steads not. Do not I too look into 'Psalms,' into a kind of Eternal Psalm, unalterable as adamant,—which the whole world yet will look into? Courage, my brave one!"

On the 30th January, 1661, three sledges left London for Tyburn each bearing a coffin which contained the body of a man long dead.

"When these three carcases were at Tyburn," says a contemporary account of the proceedings, "they were pulled out of their coffins, and hanged at the several angles of that triple tree, where they hung till the sun

was set, after which they were taken down, their heads cut off, and their loathsome trunks thrown into a deep hole under the gallows. The heads of those three notorious regicides, Oliver Cromwell, John Bradshaw, and Henry Ireton, are set upon poles on the top of Westminster Hall by the common hangman."

Thus might Charles the Second wreak pitiful vengeance on the conqueror of his father and the greatest figure in the narrative of English liberty; but in the same year Isaac Newton entered Trinity College, Cambridge, and the whole history of the English thought turned into a channel where neither King nor Pope could any longer play the part of Canute.

CHAPTER VII

THE AGE OF WESLEY

(1703–1791)

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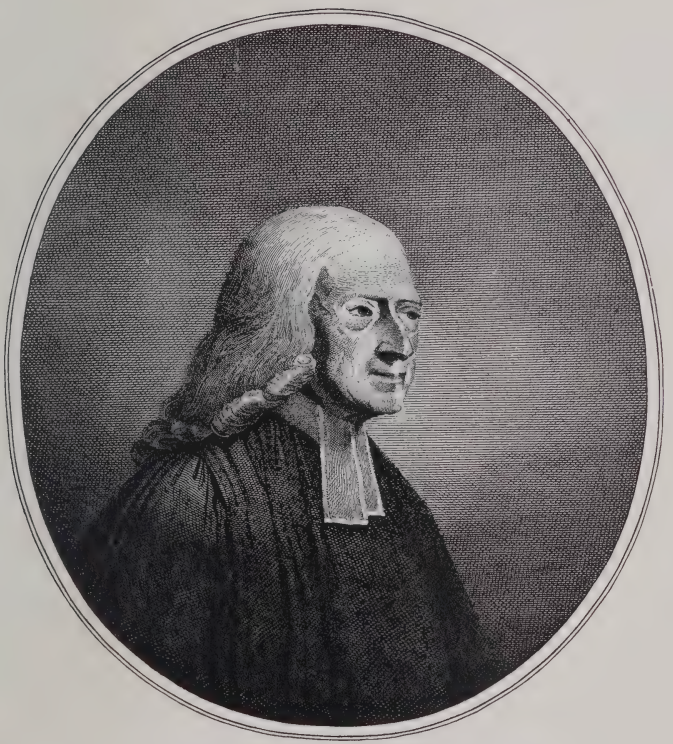
UNDER Cromwell, says a writer in an old Scotch dictionary of biography, England was "unquestionably the strongest state in Europe; yet, no sooner had he departed than it fell, as if by magic, into the utmost extreme of impotency. Its next monarch was a pensioner on the bounty of the magnificent Frenchman."

Concerning Cromwell he proceeds as follows:

"In the field he was everywhere triumphant, yet no sooner was he gone, than the military operations of England became puerile and ludicrous. Oliver's flag, the red cross of Saint George, swept from the ocean every hostile banner. France, Holland, and Spain, were humbled into maritime submission, and the Barbary corsairs were scourged into good behaviour—piracy was annihilated, and the naval supremacy of England was established as an unquestioned and indisputable fact. Yet Oliver gone —and the Dutch with impunity sail up the Thames and the Medway. He had the most moral court that had ever been known in the history of Europe, yet a few short

years saw vice unblushingly enthroned, and the silken shoe of the courtezan treading the halls that had echoed to the jackboots of Oliver Cromwell and his pious Ironsides. In Oliver's time the judge sat in the magnificence of rectitude; and for the first time in the history of modern nations justice was administered in the fear of God. Yet Oliver gone, and Judge Jeffreys springs from the pandemonium of the corrupted English law. Everything seemed to decay and ferment into corruption. As if the force of gravity had been removed from the terrestrial economy, no sooner was the iron will of Oliver removed from the state of England, than chaos, confusion, and failure seemed to invade every department of the realm, and every operation of the body politic. Defeat, disgrace, and shame, took the places of victory, honour, and estimation, until the fury of England was once more roused, and the last Stuart, in ignominious flight, took refuge with the neighbour nation, whom Oliver would have bearded with the sword. The contrast between England in the time of the Protector, and England in the days of Charles and James, is one of the most remarkable that has been recorded on the page of history. Tragedy or comedy, it is the strangest drama that has been played in England since the Saxon dynasty died out at Hastings, and England became the heritage of the feudal and punctilious Norman."

The Restoration, according to Mark Pattison, was a moral catastrophe. "It was not that there wanted good men among the Churchmen, men as pious and virtuous as the Puritans whom they displaced. But the Royalists



JOHN WESLEY

Done from a miniature of the same size
Painted by I. Barry

came back as the party of reaction, reaction of the spirit of the world against asceticism, of self-indulgence against duty, of materialism against idealism."

"For a time virtue was a public laughing-stock, and the word 'saint,' the highest expression in the language for moral perfection, connoted everything that was ridiculous. . . . The style of court manners was a mere incident on the surface of social life. The national life was more profoundly tainted by the discouragement of all good men, which penetrated every shire and every parish, than by the distant reports of the loose behaviour of Charles II. Servility, meanness, venality, time-serving, and a disbelief in virtue diffused themselves over the nation like a pestilential miasma. . . ."

The heroic age of England, he says, had passed away, "not by gradual decay, by imperceptible degeneration, but in a year, in a single day, like the winter's snow in Greece." A disbelief in virtue is perhaps the most deadly disease that can pray upon a nation. In the case of England it must have proved fatal but for a faithful remnant of the true Puritans.

Roman decadence, says Gilbert Murray, tends to exaggeration, vainglory, excess of ornament; Greek decadence is humble and weary. English decadence, we may say, because of the root of Socratic Puritanism which still feeds the national character, is bitter, scornful, and indignant. It is as if the nation had been disappointed, duped, fooled in the sight of men and angels. It cries out to God

> For all the sins wherewith the face of man
> Is blackened, man's forgiveness give, and take,

and goes on its sensual way with an air either of coarse brutality or roystering content which does not, however, hide the hurt in its heart. Fox used to say that the worst kind of Revolution is a Restoration.

Few incidents in the reign of Charles the Second are more haunting and more illuminating than the incident unearthed only in recent years which tells us how this smiling debauchee had a son by a lady in Jersey, his eldest son, who became first a scholar in Holland, then a monk, and who came often to England in secret, at Charles' poignant request, to talk to his father about the Catholic faith. It was with tears in his eyes that Charles once told the Catholic gentlemen of his Court how earnestly he longed to be able to confess his Romanism. The only reality in that shallow and unhappy heart was the ghost of religion.

To understand the reaction in England it is above all things important that we should see one of its causes in the degeneracy of the later Puritans. Macaulay, who abominated the vices and the effeminacy of the Royalists, who applauded the famous attack of Jeremy Collier on the sensual and blasphemous condition of the stage, and who calls the Puritans "the deliverers of England, the founders of the American Commonwealths," nevertheless has the manful courage to confess that the attempt of the

later Puritans to make men moral by Act of Parliament was fatal to the progress of virtue. Hypocrisy crept in; "the short-sighted policy which aimed at making a nation of saints has made a nation of scoffers"; and, as usual, the nation "rushes to the extreme opposite to that which it quits."

This reaction outlasted the ignominious reign of Charles the Second and was busy with English character under Queen Anne in the opening years of the eighteenth century. But with the progress of that great century the English mind gradually steadied itself, and, avoiding the excesses both of the Puritan and the Cavalier, addressed itself to those two supreme issues of human life with which evolution appears chiefly to be concerned, namely, conduct and knowledge.

Bossuet inferred from the very variety of opinions among mankind that, saving one, all should be suppressed. On hearing of religious toleration in Holland, he exclaimed, "Happy country, where the heretic is at rest as well as the orthodox, where vipers are preserved like doves and innocent animals, where those who compound poisons enjoy the same tranquillity with those who prepare remedies." The logic of this irony was felt as keenly by the Puritan as the Papist. It was founded on an assumption which had been current in the European mind for more than a thousand years, the assumption that a man's opinion concerning the Christian religion will determine his destiny after death for ever and ever.

The first vital attack on this assumption was delivered by John Locke, born in 1632, six years after the death of Bacon. Brought up in Puritan principles, he remained a severe moralist to the day of his death in 1704, dying with the words of a Psalm in his ears, read to him by his friend Lady Masham, after having spent the last four years of his life in a study of the Bible. But deeply as his soul was disposed to religion, the chief inspiration of his mind was a courageous curiosity concerning physical phenomena. The works of Descartes fired him as a youth with enthusiasm for common sense in philosophy. Medicine, so powerfully influenced by Servetus and William Harvey, attracted him as offering an explanation of the human body, chemistry as promising a revelation of the mystery of the universe; for a number of years he kept a journal of his observation of weather changes by means of the barometer, thermometer, and hygrometer. These philosophical and scientific studies, and his interest as a man of the world in the government of states, induced him to write two pamphlets which have had a profound political influence, and an essay which turned European thought into a new channel.

Locke opposed himself to the theory that kings have a right to the unquestioning obedience of their subjects, and laid it down, with the old counsellors consulted by Rehoboam, that government can only be just and rational when it is in the interest of those who are governed, that is to say, when it is the servant of mankind and not its

master. It has been said of him that in these treatises on Government and Toleration he lays the foundations of the civil liberty and the religious freedom "of which the subsequent history of the British Empire records the gradual application."

But the greatest of his benefits was the freedom from scholasticism and the robust English good sense which he brought to the modern study of philosophy. For twenty years he worked on his immortal Essay concerning Human Understanding, which was finished in 1686, the same year in which Newton finished his *Principia.* It was published in 1690, and by the beginning of the eighteenth century was working in men's minds throughout the length and breadth of Europe. Bossuet might well have cited it as proceeding from the dispensary of a poisoner, for it produced followers who were at sword's point with one another, and enthusiasts whose reasons for enthusiasm were poles asunder; but its great achievement lay in freeing men's minds from the dogmatism of authority, and setting those enfranchised minds to ask themselves the most primitive and therefore the most fruitful questions concerning themselves and the universe about them.

How do we know things? How do we know right from wrong? How do we arrive at our ideas? This mind, which is to decide for weal or for woe my eternal destiny, what do I know about it? What are the grounds of opinion, what is the nature of knowledge?

Locke decided against the idea that we are born either with knowledge of our destiny or equipment for our warfare. He argued that our knowledge is the result of experience. We learn as we go along; truth is something to be discovered, not something which is handed down with our minds. He distinguishes between what the brain may attempt to know and what it cannot hope to know. He distinguishes also between the primary qualities of a thing, such as its form and density, and its secondary qualities, such as its colour or its heat, which do not properly belong to it. He denies that we are born with a knowledge of God, but asserts that the existence of God can be proved from rational observation of the universe. The very fact that a child is not born with the idea of God implies that there are no such things as innate ideas.

We cannot stop to inquire whether this philosophy is either shallow or inconsistent. We are concerned only with its contemporary effect. Locke, like Socrates, it is said, "has moved philosophical thought in the most opposite directions, to the most various results, while both Socrates in Greece and Locke in Europe, by their earnest and unsystematic discourse, have aroused the two most powerful manifestations of reflection which the world has yet seen."

One of his effects was to plunge religion into the philosophical cauldron of theology, setting it to think rather than to act, to defend its position rather than transmit its fire. A large part of the history of the eighteenth century

is occupied by theological controversies which no longer interest mankind. These controversies arose not only from Locke's Essay itself, but indirectly from the various effects of that Essay on the minds of other men. He hatched far more than his own chickens. Scepticism, as we now understand that ambiguous term, was born of Locke's inquiry. If the idealist Bishop Berkeley was a disciple of Locke, Hume was his student. Leibnitz and Kant were both inspired by Locke, and so was Voltaire.

It seemed, in the end, as if man would accept the theory of a God, but only the Aristotelian God of whom he could know nothing, and whose interest in the fortunes of a trivial planet must obviously be very slight. The Christianity of Sir Isaac Newton had no effect on the intellectual life of his generation, but his astronomy influenced the entire world and was a plank in the platform of Deism. Gone was the idea of this earth as the centre of things, with all the starry universe for its satellite; gone, too, was the notion of things happening by the active will of an ever watchful Providence. The greater man became in moral stature and intellectual power, the less reason he discovered for thinking of himself as the lord of creation.

The problem arose, What was to become of virtue? What was to be the new authority in human life? The most notable answer was given by the Lord Shaftesbury of that day. He accused the Church of blaspheming both

God and Man. The idea of reward and punishment awoke his indignation. What value is there in goodness that fears the punitive consequences of evil? "There is no more of rectitude, piety, or sanctity in a creature thus reformed than there is of weakness or gentleness in a tiger strongly chained, or innocence and sobriety in a monkey under the discipline of the whip." He rejected with disdain the theological dogma of human corruption. There is in man, he said, a "moral sense," inventing that useful term to account for the power in man which makes, even against his own inclination, for righteousness. "Should anyone ask me, why I would avoid being nasty when nobody was present, I should think him a very nasty gentleman to ask the question. If he insisted, I should reply, Because I have a nose."

Unfortunately, France was to prove at the end of the century, like Russia at the beginning of the present century, that the world is full of "nasty gentlemen," and that in vast numbers of the human race "moral sense" works in anything but a moral way. Leave conduct in the sphere of taste, destroy its religious roots, and you get your Lenins and De Valeras. England, it is true, escaped the dreadful and atrocious horrors of the French Revolution, but she escaped that punishment for her sins because her people were just then very seriously occupied with an effort to escape from them. Nothing in his own day occurred to shake Shaftesbury's faith in his thesis, but

later events might surely have convinced him either that the nose reports very differently to the brain or that the interpreting brain is hardly to be trusted with the freedom of the nose.

Pierced to its centre, this philosophy reduces morality to a question of taste. He judges a man, says Leslie Stephen, "as a critic would judge of the harmony of a pictorial or a musical composition." When he gives us his canons of criticism, in place of a moral rule, "we feel that he is a rather poor substitute for St. Paul or Marcus Aurelius." Emerson said of the Anglican Church in the nineteenth century that the doctrine it preached was, "By taste ye are saved."

Something deeper, something stronger, above all something infinitely simpler was necessary just then for the salvation of England.

Great names in the eighteenth century are legion. And almost each of those great names stands for something definite in the region of intellect. I need mention but a few to remind the reader of the grandeur of those days. Newton lived for twenty-seven years in this country. Edmund Halley and James Bradley continued his revolution until England led the world in astronomical science. Dr. Johnson was one of the most loveable and honourable figures of the century. Hume and Gibbon are among its most formidable names. Hogarth is perhaps its best historian. Burke is one of its most noble orators.

Handel is there. Reynolds and Gainsborough are there. William Law, Chillingworth, Stillingfleet, Berkeley, Tillotson, Warburton, who boasted that he had trimmed Hume's jacket, William Wake, Bishop Butler, Paley, Hoadley, are there. Addison is there, with a beauty, delicacy, tenderness, and a radiance hitherto unknown in English literature. Swift is there with a new irony, Daniel Defoe with a new realism, Adam Smith with a new philosophy, and John Howard is there, too, with a new philanthropy. Fielding, Goldsmith, Sterne, Richardson, and Smollett belonged to this Augustan Age, as do Pope, Gray, Burns, Cowper, and Sheridan. As if this was not riches enough for England, the same age saw the birth of Shelley, Coleridge, and Wordsworth.

Mark Pattison denounces the early years of this century as an age destitute of faith and earnestness—"an age whose poetry was without romance, whose philosophy was without insight, and whose public men were without character." Mr. Augustine Birrell agrees; it was a brutal age:

" . . . an age of the press-gang, of the whipping-post, of gaol-fever, and all the horrors of the criminal code; an ignorant age, when the population, lords and louts alike, drank with great freedom and reckoned cock-fighting among the more innocent joys of life; when education of the kind called popular, or, more correctly, primary . . . was hardly thought of; a corrupt age,

when offices and votes were bought and sold, and bishops owed their sees to the King's women."

During the first thirteen years of the century, in London alone 242 criminals were hanged at Tyburn; "women were strangled and their bodies burnt for *petit* treason, that is, the murder of husbands, and coining. Men and women were put in the pillory, especially for seditious libel, and were sometimes killed by the ill-usage of the mobs. The discipline in the navy and army, always severe became incredibly harsh with the introduction of German methods during the Seven Years' War."

So writes Mr. I. S. Leadam in *The Political History of England,* who tells us that for the first sixty years of the century commerce and industry were depressed, agriculture was at a standstill, and all trade was much impeded by the founderous condition of the roads. Goods were carried by pack-horses because tradesmen and merchants could not, like the nobility, afford a retinue of servants to pull carriages out of the ruts; the gentry made their journey by horseback, carrying their ladies on pillions. Public coaches became commoner in the reign of the First George, "but they could not make more than about five miles an hour, and were commonly drawn by six horses with postillions." Stage-wagons took ten days in summer and eleven in winter to travel between Lancashire and London. "A journey without accident was scarcely expected. To the risk of being upset was added

the risk of being plundered. It was the golden age of the highwaymen, of whom the best known to fame, Richard Turpin, was executed at York in 1739."

"The dangers of the streets of London, their filthy state, the streams from the gutter spouts, the pestilential 'kennel,' the scanty light from the lanterns and oil-lamps at night was much the same in 1760 as when Gay wrote *Trivia* in 1715. But these inconveniences were trifling compared to the risk of being tormented by brawling men of fashion called 'Mohocks' and 'Hawkubites,' or robbed and murdered by the footpads who molested unfrequented thoroughfares."

To these details, Mr. Leadam adds a useful catalogue of fashion. In 1746 an Admiral paid £51 5*s.* 1*d.* and £75 8*s.* for two embroidered waistcoats. "Swift complained of paying three guineas for a wig; a beau would pay forty." Physicians carried a muff to conserve the temperature of their hands. Barristers and clergymen wore their robes and gowns in the street, while certain young swaggerers among the clergy paraded the town in the scarves of doctors of divinity. Tradesmen aped the gentry, and wore laced hats, swords, and wigs tied with ribbon. The wire frames of ladies' head-dresses fell by a change of fashion a matter of two feet. Hoops varied only in shape, not in size: they were prodigious. Lace shirts and ruffles were worn by men, who kissed themselves in greeting. A certain formality marked the affections of domestic life. "Sons and daughters, even

when of mature years, knelt both in public and in private for their parents' blessing."

We have Mr. William Hunt's authority for the following facts: Till the end of the century thefts above the value of twelve pence were punishable by hanging. As late as 1773 a woman was strangled and burnt at the stake, 20,000 people looking on. Women were whipped in public. Ninety-six persons were hanged at the Old Bailey in ten months. Men, women, and children were huddled together in prisons which had no sewers and no water supply. Forty thousand people were engaged in the smuggling trade, and two-thirds of the tea and half the brandy consumed in England paid no duty. The magistrates were corrupt. The police force was so insufficient that footpads robbed carriages in Grosvenor Square and Piccadilly. "Riots were frequent in times of scarcity or popular excitement, and often could only be quelled by soldiers."

On the other side of the picture are the following virtues rightly and humorously emphasised by Mr. Birrell:

"During the eighteenth century our two Universities, famous despite their faults, were always open to the poor scholar, who was ready to subscribe, not to boat clubs or cricket clubs, but to the Thirty-Nine Articles. Three Archbishops of Canterbury during the eighteenth century were the sons of small tradesmen. There was,

in fact, much less snobbery and money-worship during the century when the British Empire was being won than during the century when it is being talked about."

The religious state of the country may be judged from the fact that many bishops never visited their dioceses, and that there were numerous parishes without a resident clergyman. Christianity, even in its outward forms, says Mr. D. C. Somervell, was apparently extinct in certain places. At Haworth, in Yorkshire, "the dead were buried with drunken orgies, but with no burial service." The village was haunted by a phantom dog which was supposed to roam the moors at night—those moors over which Charlotte and Emily Brontë walked in after years.

It was into this age, born in the year 1703, that John Wesley came with a message wholly different from that of either the contemporary theologians or the contemporary philosophers, but strangely alike both to the message of Socrates and the message of Jesus. The essayist whom I have just quoted calls him "the greatest force of the eighteenth century in England." Historians, he says, have dismissed him curtly; but "the fact is, Wesley puts your ordinary historian out of conceit with himself."

"No man lived nearer the centre than John Wesley, neither Clive nor Pitt, neither Mansfield nor Johnson. You cannot cut him out of our national life. No single figure influenced so many minds, no single voice touched

so many hearts. No other man did such a life's work for England."

It is far easier for the historian, he says, to weave into his page "the gossip of Horace Walpole, to enliven it with a heartless jest of George Selwyn's, to make it blush with sad stories of the extravagance of Fox, to embroider it with the rhetoric of Burke, to humanise it with the talk of Johnson . . . than to follow John Wesley into the streets of Bristol or on to the bleak moors near Burslem, where he met face to face in all their violence, all their ignorance, and all their generosity the living men, women, and children who made up the nation." [1]

Of Robert Southey's *Life of John Wesley* Macaulay said: "Defective as it is, it contains the only popular account of a most remarkable moral revolution and of a man whose eloquence and logical acuteness might have made him eminent in literature, whose genius in government was not inferior to that of Richelieu, and who, whatever his errors may have been, devoted all his powers, in defiance of obloquy and derision, to what he sincerely considered as the highest good of his species."

For forty years, mostly on horseback, Wesley "contested the three kingdoms in the cause of Christ," covering many more miles than Dick Turpin, and paying "more turnpikes than any man who ever bestrode a beast." For many a long year, and over those founder-

[1] *Miscellanies*, pp. 13, 14.

ous roads, 8,000 miles was the annual record of this scholarly and delicate clergyman, of whom his parson father had declared in 1726, "Whatever I am, my Jack is Fellow of Lincoln."

If we inquire how it was he came to ride horseback through the eighteenth century, how it was he did not remain a Fellow of Lincoln, or proceed quietly from a country rectory to an episcopal palace, we shall discover a certain secret in the religion of Christianity which had escaped the notice of almost every professional commentator and accredited theologian from its earliest beginnings—a secret which lends itself to every age because it is not bound by theological opinion or tied to any particular mode of worship.

Some of the mystics possessed themselves of this secret, but few of them shared it with the world. John Bunyan made a characteristically English effort to share it with mankind, and George Fox organised a society to perpetuate its knowledge. But none of these saw so clearly as Wesley did, or with so consuming a compassion for those without its knowledge, that this secret was of utmost importance to human life, and that its knowledge was to be carried to all sorts and conditions of men, even to the most ignorant, the most degraded, and the most powerless.

This secret has the character of all substantial greatness in that it is quite simple. It is a revelation to man

that religion is a power personal to the individual soul: that it is not a verbal assent to a number of difficult metaphysical propositions, nor conformity to a traditional rite of public worship, but a way of looking at life, a manner of living—an authority in the mind and a power in the heart. He saw religion first as a choice between two roads, and second as a destiny here and hereafter. A man is either travelling towards God or away from God. He is sowing either wheat or tares. He can choose which he will do. The whole history of man is determined by this decision. To have faith in God is to be born again, to become a new creature. Surrender the will to God, and the slaveries of sense drop away from you: you are free from all fears, all delusions, all tyrannies of circumstance or heredity. He preached a hundred times from the text, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature," and constantly wrote in his *Journal* of "prisoners set at liberty." To him, as it was to Socrates, religion meant a liberation of the soul from illusion, an ascent of the spirit into reality. In finding man a Master, he found him his liberty.

In this sense Wesley conceived of religion, and set out to rouse the soul of England from its slumber of death. The three great words of his discourse were God, Christ, Sin. He could so employ these words that his hearers would be thrown into swoons, would fall down as if dead, would cry out that Satan had them in

his grip, and yet he never ranted, never descended to intimidation. It was his knowledge of the human heart, his sympathy with the sufferings of mankind, and his manifest possession of healing power which made those words so terrifically real to the multitude. The most neglected and despised classes of the nation felt that God had sent them a messenger. He visited prisons and endeavoured to convert the souls of condemned felons. Few entries in his *Journal* are more illuminating than this on April 2, 1740: "Calling at Newgate in the afternoon I was informed that the poor wretches under sentence of death were earnestly desirous to speak with me; but it could not be; Alderman Beecher having just then sent an express order that they should not. I cite Alderman Beecher to answer for these souls at the judgment-seat of Christ." Even the churches soon forbade him to preach from their pulpits.

Biblical criticism was in its infancy. His theology was the theology of his time. He believed in the Fall of Man, in the inspiration of the Bible, in the crucifixion as a sacrifice for sin, and in the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. To him, much more sharply than to Sydney Smith or Warburton, who held this same theology, it came home as a piercing thought, shattering all idea of ease or pleasure, that the vast multitudes of England were going down to a perdition possibly eternal, not only for their sins, but also for want of a

preacher to tell them the means of salvation. He was a realist, like the Puritans, but a realist who thought of other people. It was not enough for him that he himself had entered into life; he could not rest until he had brought the feet of others into the way of peace.

Yet there was nothing gloomy about the man, nothing morbid, nothing that marked him as a neurotic. He parted with Whitefield because that great preacher was a Calvinist. He had the grace of a scholar, the charm which goes with a slightly quizzical humour, and that immense attraction which emanates only from a perfectly sincere spirit. "His countenance, as well as conversation, expressed an habitual gaiety of heart," says Alexander Knox; ". . . he was, in truth, the most perfect specimen of moral happiness which I ever saw." Dr. Johnson found no fault with him, save that he had no time for talk. "John Wesley's conversation is good, but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have out his talk, as I do." Wesley's legs, as we have seen, were happier astride a horse on his way to a meeting.[1]

There is a famous incident connected with these rides

[1] Elsewhere Dr. Johnson says, "He can talk well on any subject." In giving Boswell a letter of introduction to Wesley he wrote, "I think it very much to be wished that worthy and religious men should be acquainted with each other."

in Wesley's *Journal,* under the date of the 20th May, 1742, which shows us the humorous side of the man:

"The next afternoon I stopped a little at Newport Pagnell, and then rode on till I overtook a serious man, with whom I immediately fell into conversation. He presently gave me to know what his opinions were, therefore I said nothing to contradict them. But that did not content him. He was quite uneasy to know 'whether I held the doctrines of the decrees as he did'; but I told him over and over: 'We had better keep to practical things, lest we should be angry at one another.' And so we did for two miles, till he caught me unawares, and dragged me into the dispute before I knew where I was. He then grew warmer and warmer; told me I was rotten at heart, and supposed I was one of John Wesley's followers. I told him 'No. I am John Wesley himself.' Upon which

> *Improvisum aspris veluti qui sentibus anguem*
> *Pressit,*[1]

he would gladly have run away outright, but being the better mounted of the two I kept close to his side, and endeavoured to show him his heart till we came into the streets of Northampton."

That Wesley, with his intense conviction of the truth of religion, should have preserved this sense of humour in an age so full of barren formalism and downright infidelity in the Church itself, is memorable evidence to the beauty of his character and the fineness of his mind.

[1] *As one who treads unexpectedly on a snake.*

He never denounced his false Church, and only at the last and with the greatest unwillingness ordained ministers for the particular work of conversion. It is puzzling how a man so earnest could have held his peace in the presence of a Church which so ludicrously misrepresented the Christ of salvation. Walter Bagehot, reviewing the works of Laurence Sterne, referred to a volume of Yorick's sermons in these words:

"People wonder at the rise of Methodism; but ought they to wonder? If a clergyman publishes his sermons *because* he has written an indecent novel—a novel which is purely pagan—which is outside the ideas of Christianity, whose author can scarcely have been inside of them—if a man so made and so circumstanced is as *such* to publish Christian sermons, surely Christianity is a joke and a dream."

On all sides of Wesley was religious buffoonery, mockery, coldness, apathy, hypocrisy, and self-deception of a quite staggering order. But he retained his serenity, and met the violent abuse of his brother clergymen with a smile. Brougham exclaimed in the House of Commons, "How will the reverend bishops of the other House be able to express their due abhorrence of the crime of perjury, who solemnly declare in the presence of God that when they are called upon to accept a living, perhaps of £4,000 a year, at the very instant they are moved by the Holy Ghost to accept the office and administration there-

of, and for no other reason whatever?" Wesley knew the condition of the Church but he made no sign of leaving it.

When we reflect on these things the equanimity of Wesley is amazing, not his crusade. That crusade, a searching for inward truth was Socratic and was not altogether lacking in the Socratic geniality; but it was heightened and beautified by the spirit of Jesus. It was an immense effort on the part of man's soul to escape from unreality, from illusion, from self-deception, from pretence, formalism, and all shallowness, to escape from these fetters of the prison-house into the clear and vivid atmosphere of an honest day. Like Socrates, Wesley bade men look within, to beware of self-deception, to seek after their own inward truth. Like Jesus, he bade them believe implicitly in the fatherly intentions of God. They were not to strive after their own salvation: they were not to put their trust in the preformance of religious duties; they were to acknowledge their sins, to long earnestly for liberation, and to open wide the doors of their hearts to the divine influence.

He simplified Christian theology exactly as Jesus had simplified the theology of Judaism. He brought God near to the heart of every man. He made that heart feel its need of God. And he united the heart of God and the heart of man in the love manifested on this earth in the heart of Jesus. Life without God is animalism and tor-

por; with God it is an ascent into a region of quiet joy and confident patience.

The success which attended his mission is not an occasion for wonderment. Something in the soul of man instantly responds to reality. It is unreality which depresses men, insincerity which disposes them to cynicism, falsehood which renders them mad. They overthrow dynasties which enthrone a lie, and destroy churches whose altars are served by hypocrisy, not because they hate government or deny God, but because they hate bad government and false deities, and because their patience with unreality is exhausted. Wesley's success in England saved the country from revolution because he had roused a great body of persons in the nation to be more intent on mending their own lives than brooding over their grievances or dreaming of Utopias. A new reality in religion visited the British Isles when all Europe was quaking with revolution, a reality not to be taken on trust from a priesthood, a reality which needed no scholarship for its understanding, but a reality which each man could test for himself in the inwardness of his own life. For him "inward holiness" meant a conscious union of the soul with God.

"God is near you, with you, within you," wrote Seneca. "This I say, Lucilius; a holy spirit sits within us, watches over our good and evil deeds, and is guardian over us. Even as we treat him, he treats us." And elsewhere,

"Externals are not within my power; choice is. Where, then, shall I seek good and evil? Why, within, in what is my own." This reality of Stoicism became in Wesley a new Christian reality, an overpowering sense of an inward divinity. Men became shudderingly aware of a God within them, and of a tremendous disloyalty whenever they sinned against conscience.

This spirit of reality worked in the whole church, in the whole nation. Priests became more earnest, merchants and shopkeepers more honest. The thrift which the Puritans had regarded as a virtue provided British industry at a crisis in its fortunes with capital which enabled it to increase the national wealth amazingly, in spite of the loss of the American colonies. Politics became more serious as a new philanthropy exposed the terrible conditions of social life. The fox-hunting and port-drinking parson became something of a scandal. The priest who made fun of the Methodist preachers began to be more careful about his own sermons. A corrupt magistrate learned to fear a new thing in life—the social conscience of England. Cruelty and injustice continued to exist, and far into the next century the wealth of England was stained with the sufferings of children and the greed of manufacturers; but vested interests were now conscious of a struggle ahead of them; for evangelicalism was binding the flower of the working-classes into unions, the schoolmaster, thanks to Robert Raikes, was abroad, and a living sympathy between the privileged

and the depressed classes, unlike anything that had hitherto existed, was growing rapidly out of the ministrations of an evangelical church.

The political consequences of this movement were important. In every sphere of human activity there was now an authority greater than the law of the land—the law of the conscience, the moral law, the law of God. This supreme authority of conscience was a commonplace of seventeenth-century Independents and of other Puritan sects, but it became a tremendous power after Wesley. There was no foreground in the national life without this background. Everything now could be appraised by a standard, judged by a principle. Chaos and confusion gave way to a new and imperative urge. The nation seemed to have received its marching orders. Its discipline was the loyalty of each man's heart to the voice of God. Its music was the English Bible.

When the Revolution came in France, it roused in moral England a feeling of horror and loathing. When the Napoleonic menace darkened the sky, the whole nation felt itself as one man in its determination to destroy the destroyer. A flood of evangelical feeling carried England from the eighteenth century far into the nineteenth, and withdrew only when its living impulse had hardened into a tradition, weakened by materialistic prosperity, and intimidated by the challenge of a new theory in biology.

Inwardness came to be a word, new-birth a matter of form; the rigidity of institutionalism killed personal re-

ligion. Conversion was discredited by the hysteria and vulgarity which marked most of the efforts at its revival. Men turned away from themselves and attended to exterior nature. Socrates and Plato were forgotten. Aristotle ruled. The moral law lost its authority, and the will to power took the place of conscience. There was still in many places a lip service to idealism, but materialism ruled human existence, and 1914 came to tell mankind that it was on a wrong road.

"One may say that the whole development of Christianity in inwardness," writes William James, "has consisted in little more than the greater and greater emphasis attached to this crisis of self-surrender. From Catholicism to Lutheranism, and then to Calvinism; from that to Wesleyanism; and from this, outside of technical Christianity altogether, to pure 'Liberalism' or transcendental idealism, whether or not of the mind-cure type, taking in the mediaeval mystics, the quietists, the pietists, and quakers by the way, we can trace the stages of progress towards the idea of an immediate spiritual help, experienced by the individual in his forlornness and standing in no essential need of doctrinal apparatus or propitiatory machinery." [1]

Whether Christianity is to develop in this direction remains to be seen. If not, where are men to look for

[1] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 210, 211.

authority, for principles, for standards? Certainly it appears as if organised religion, clinging to phrases and to forms which have lost all sharpness of reality for the great bulk of mankind, is not likely to play any creative part in the present chapter of the human epic. Men are too busy to bother their head with echoes. "The spirit that dwelt in this Church," said Emerson, "has glided away to animate other activities; and they who come to the old shrines find apes and players rustling the old garments." Christianity has no right to forms until it has created Christendom. It is not the curator of a museum, but a vital principle of evolution. Its business is not to guard and to treasure, but to permeate and transform. Until it recognises this truth, humanity must look elsewhere for a principle of existence which can make virtue a power and bind the disintegrating tendencies of anarchy.

To one who reads history as the narrative of the human mind groping its heroic way from the imposition of its own senses and the manifold deceits of exterior nature towards that invisible Reality which seems to call to it from the hidden fertility of the future, it must appear inconceivable that the ethical ideas of Jesus should ever lose their meaning, and that the Personality of Jesus should ever cease from haunting the heart of man and pleading with his conscience.

In the darkness of that materialism which returns again and again to the earth, which is always strong but

never so strong as after a period of spiritual exhaustion, there is no voice so likely to call men back to the truth of their existence as that tender, compassionate, but uncompromising Voice which religious intolerance has never silenced and religious excitement has never drowned. The torch of science may light up for mankind the darkness which surrounds it, but held in the hand of an animal, with no thesis of existence and with no logic but self-indulgence, it can but lead the way to another wilderness and to another Armageddon. Something more is necessary to ensure the peace of man's mental journey.

Certain elements in Christianity, it is argued, give it a permanent value—"the conception of God as love—the full implication of which has never yet been realised—the conception of man as spiritual and akin to God, the conception of human life as eternal." This is true. But one wonders whether, for the present generation at least, Christianity possesses either attraction or interest. That is the first question which confronts us in looking forward to the immediate future of civilisation. The next fifty years may decide the character of the next three centuries.

CONCLUSION

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In the introduction to this brief chronicle of mental travel it was suggested that if our rights and privileges have been purchased by the past, some at least of our obligations and duties belong to the future.

Among those obligations and duties, if our reading of history is a true one, is the obligation to think rationally and the duty to think effectively.

This proposition will appear as a truth even to the most careless reader if he reflect for a moment on the only propulsive force which bears the children of men from one epoch to another and from the bewilderments of illusion to the confidence of reality.

There is no "river of time" in the geography of human experience: no "stream of tendency" outside the realm of metaphor. The one flood which bears men from change to change flows only in the human mind. The rhetorical Time Spirit is neither ghost nor ministering angel, but the thought of the human brain. We make our destiny by our thinking, and the only determinism in nature is furnished by the verdicts of the mind. The course of history is the course of thought.

When a man perceives that the motive-power in the affairs of mortality proceeds from the brain, and that the only force of evolution is the invisible energy of ideas, we may logically expect of him the realisation that it is among his obligations to think rationally. Again, when he perceives how constantly the progress of humanity has been checked and even hurled far backward towards barbarism by wrong thinking, we may as logically expect of him, if he is a moral being, the realisation that to the obligation to think rationally must be added the duty to think effectively.

To think wrongly may be disastrous, but it is not criminal. To think indifferently, on the other hand, is to commit a supreme crime against the fortunes of humanity. Indecision in public opinion is the open gate through which the forces of nihilism pour into the citadel of civilisation.

For the last fifty years or so men have been thinking in the language of agnosticism. They have shelved many questions of cardinal importance to the dignity of the human race, and put absolutely out of their consideration a question which is essential to its safety. With valid excuses provided for them by the quarrelsome controversies of theologians, they have shelved such questions as the existence of God, the nature of Deity, if Deity indeed exist, the place of Jesus in the history of religious thought, and the persistence of personality after death. But in shelving questions of this nature, they have also

put out of their minds the one question which is fundamental to any rational theory of existence, namely, the question whether the universe is moral or non-moral.

History witnesses that agnosticism in this respect is fatal to human life. Men, it seems, and naturally seems, must be for ever at the sport of passion and caprice so long as they have no firm opinions concerning the character of existence. They cannot expect security in their affairs so long as they have no foundation of any kind for their thinking. It is entirely essential that they should decide whether virtue is something more than a convenience, and whether vice is indeed an enemy to the happiness of mankind and the fruitfulness of civilisation.

At the present moment human thought seems to be sliding from the vigorous agnosticism of the past generation into a moral impotence which feels itself wholly unable to exert itself at all, much less with decision, on any subject of capital importance. This lassitude of the mind, threatening our posterity with the hideous consequence of anarchy, is chiefly due, I think, to the tyranny exercised by science. Any catchword from the laborious textbooks of physics which belittles the universe and degrades mankind is as grimly welcomed by the public consciousness as a volume of biography which exposes to the cynical derision of the present generation the flaws in the characters of their fathers' heroes. It would seem as if intellectual impotence is developing one of the worst elements in the nature of a degenerate, namely, a posi-

tive distaste for all that is great and noble, accompanied by an eager relish for all that is humiliating and disgusting.

Yet, if physical science now had a popularising and fighting Huxley for its prophet, it might deliver men from the depressing philosophy of Darwinism. For science is turning its face from Darwin to Lamarck, finding everywhere in the material universe the mystery of an invisible life which moves away from the slavery of environment and heredity to achieve self-conscious direction. Evolution is seen as a movement of mind, and he achievements of evolution are accepted as witnesses to a teleology immanent in nature. I suppose there is no man of any reputation in science who now holds the mob idea that a meaningless movement in matter produced mind and that the universe is without significance of any order.

But it took thousands of years to presuade men that this planet is a sphere, and one must suppose that it will take thousands of years before the human race unthinks its convenient Darwinism. The record of history is certain on this score, that it takes many centuries to dislodge even the most palpable of false ideas from the human mind.

Masses of men cannot support the fatigue of thinking. Give them some easy formula of materialism, particularly such a formula as Darwinism, which justifies their selfish animalism, and they are content. The tug of the past is strong in all but the saints, and the only power for

righteousness in the life of many is the policeman. To think what comes easiest, and to do what comes most natural to the lower nature of man, this is the happiness of the vast majority.

Those of us who feel that the late agony of the world was brought about in no small measure by the influence on the European mind of such phrases from physical science as "struggle for existence," "survival of the fittest," and "will to power," may well wonder what worse evil is to befall a generation still under the spell of physical science, still drugged by the fallacies of materialism, a generation ceasing every day to hold the moral agnosticism of its fathers and inclining itself more and more willingly to the positive negations of nihilism.

It is this menace to posterity which should rouse every man who recognises the importance of careful thinking to realise the equal importance of effective thinking. Our greatest weakness at the present moment is the ineffectiveness of good people, an ineffectiveness which proceeds, I think, not so much from pardonable modesty as from lack of imagination. These people who do realise the importance of right thinking, do not, unfortunately, realise that truth and goodness have always been in a minority, and have held their own merely by the superior force of their champions. They do not realise that truth and goodness can inspire in men an affection infinitely more creative and unconquerable than is possible to the deluded victims of flippancy and vice. Nor do they realise that this

affection can command their lives only if it is courageously opposed to the enemy of man's peace.

Something might be done to quicken the imagination of those who now sorrowfully follow the neglected banners of truth and goodness if it were more insistently published to the world that physical science, by its very nature, can contribute nothing to the only thesis of existence which concerns the human race. One may read all the text-books of biology without finding an explanation of the soul of Shakespeare, all the text-books of chemistry without finding an explanation of the rose, all the text-books of geology without finding an explanation of beauty. Those things which come closest to our human life—the affectionate pleasure of personality, the exaltation of music and architecture, the delight in physical beauty, the instant response of our nature to the highest poetry and the noblest action—these things, the very stuff of our spiritual life, have no place in the investigations of physical science.

What is it that physical science can tell us of the spirit of all great poetry since the beginning of time, namely, that it utters the longing of man's soul for "permanence amid change, for security in unrest," and that its use has been "to give some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it." This manifest transcendence of the human spirit, what can physical science say about it, what can it tell us?

Let us turn to history, and as plainly as the man of science finds evolution in the physical universe, we shall discover there a movement of the human soul from error to truth, from repulsiveness to beauty, and from badness to goodness. That movement, that thought in the human mind, is as greatly a fact of the universe as the sun, the ocean, and the atmosphere, and it is the work of only a few enlightened men who in generation after generation acknowledged the moral law strove for beauty and truth in the sweat of their souls, and were ready to lay down their lives for their fellow-men. Vast multitudes of weary or unimaginative men do not bother to know whether their opinions are false or true; intellectually they live like lunatics; politically and morally they constitute a grave peril to the high cause of civilisation. If this menace is to be averted, those who seek truth and desire goodness must be more active in letting their light shine before men.

Many are the ill-effects of indifference to serious thinking. Banish from the mind of a generation the restraining and uplifting idea of moral responsibility, and the politicians can see nothing but economics in the universe, the architect distorts his stone into an advertisement for wealth, the painter and the musician turn from beauty to seek the eccentric or the grotesque, the writer desires to be precious rather than useful, the dance becomes not an expression of joy but an opportunity for furtive prurience, and manners aim to startle, not to charm, to shock,

not to help. Vulgarity has always been the utterance of materialism as loveliness has always been the supreme power in periods of idealism.

It looks as though the mind of man is never to be trusted when its eye is removed from a far future and its affections rest on anything which is near at hand. Always, both for the artist and the statesman, anarchy invades when materialism has driven the idea of purpose out of man's mind. The one record of materialism down all the ages of mankind is vulgarity sliding into nihilism.

THE END

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